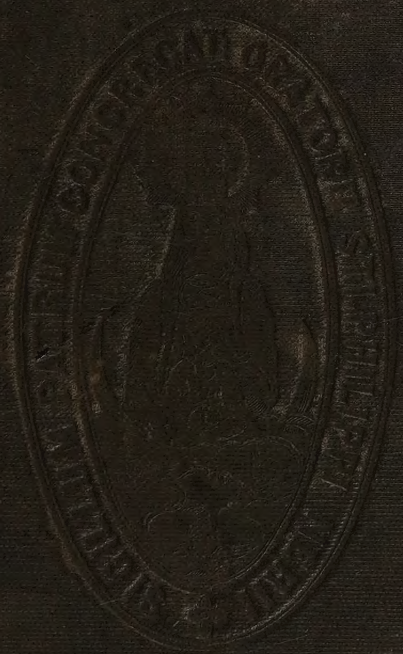

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DECUS CARMELI
ST MARY MAGDALENE
OF PAZZI.

The Saints and Servants of God.

John Shanahan.

THE LIFE

OF

ST. MARY MAGDALENE OF PAZZI,

CARMELITESS.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

NEW YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN AND BROTHER,
151, FULTON STREET.
LONDON: THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,
172, FLEET ST.; 9, CAPEL ST. DUBLIN; AND DERBY.
M. DCCC. XLIX.

We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October, 1847.

Thomas
Bishop of Cambysopolis

Nicholas
Bishop of Melipotamus

Ac; 4755

TO

THE NUNS OF ENGLAND,

WHO SHIELD THEIR COUNTRY BY THEIR PRAYERS,

AND BY THEIR MEEK AUSTERITIES

MAKE REPARATION FOR ITS SINS;

AND TO

THE SISTERS OF MERCY,

WHOSE CHARITY IS THEIR INCLOSURE,

WHILE FOR THE LOVE OF THEIR HEAVENLY SPOUSE

IN HIS POOR AND SUFFERING MEMBERS

THEY DENY THEMSELVES

THE PEACE AND PROTECTION OF THE CLOISTER.

Daughters of Mary! in retreats obscure,
Lost to man's thought and eye, amid the trees
And unfrequented fields, on bended knees
Sueing for England's pardon, lives so pure
Mingle in heaven and God's approval share
With that uncloistered love, whose willing feet
Are borne through jeering crowd and gazing street
To scenes of lonely want and pining care.
For you the holy past is now unfurled,
That with its bright examples you may feed
The spirit of devotion. While the world
Honours your goodness with its hatred, you,
Still to your high and calm vocation true,
May win fresh light and strength from what you read.

F. W. Faber.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of our Lady of Redemption,
M. DCCC. XLVII.

PREFACE.

The following Life of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi is translated from the Italian of Father Virgilio Cepari, Jesuit. The edition which has been followed is that published at Rome by Bernabò, in 1669, with the additions of F. Giuseppe Fozi, S. J., and dedicated by the nuns of the Monastery of the Most Holy Incarnation to Clement IX. It has the approbation of F. Oliva, General of the Jesuits, and the usual Roman Imprimaturs besides. They who remember the way in which the Congregation of Rites, quoted by Benedict XIV., speaks of F. Cepari's Life of St. Aloysius, will feel the utmost confidence in this Life of St. Mary Magdalene, whom F. Cepari had known personally as confessor-extraordinary to her convent.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Birth and parentage of the saint	1
II.	Of her delight in almsgiving, and in hearing others speak of God	2
III.	Of her devotion to the most holy Trinity and the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist	3
IV.	Of her voluntary application to prayer, her love of retirement, and dislike of vain shows	5
V.	Of her early temperance, her zeal for the honour of God, and her desire to instruct little children in the principles of the holy faith	7
VI.	She is ordered by her confessor to meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ; the desire of suffering for Christ is kindled in her heart; the means by which she accomplished this desire	10
VII.	At ten years of age she communicates for the first time; her vow of perpetual virginity	13
VIII.	Of her virtues; her love of God increases with her years; the rewards assigned to her good works	15
IX.	She is placed by her parents in the monastery of St. John	17
X.	The testimony given by the nuns of San Giovanni to the life which Caterina led whilst with them	19
XI.	She is removed from the monastery and placed in the hands of the physicians	24
XII.	She discloses to her father her desire of becoming a nun, and sedulously tries to win her mother's consent	25
XIII.	She obtains her mother's permission to become a nun	28
XIV.	Of the monasteries which pleased Caterina, and how she chose that of Santa Maria degl' Angeli for her place of trial; a full account of that monastery	31
XV.	She enters the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli on trial; her deportment whilst there	37

CHAPTER PAGE

XVI. On her return home she gives various examples of virtue, and at last returns to the monastery, to quit it no more - - - - 40

XVII. Of the preparation and dispositions with which she took the religious habit; her change of name - - - - - - - - - 43

XVIII. Of the virtuous example which she gave in her novitiate - - - - - - - - - 47

XIX. She wishes to anticipate the time of her profession; an extraordinary transport of love which she experiences - - - - - 51

XX. Her profession is deferred that others may be professed with her; she foretells that she shall make it alone, which she does - - 53

XXI. She is rapt in ecstasy for forty days successively, after having been communicated on her bed - - - - - - - - - 56

XXII. Some intelligences which were imparted to her in these morning ecstasies - - - - 59

XXIII. Of other transports of love experienced by her during these forty days after vespers - - 62

XXIV. Of one transport in which she witnessed the entire Passion of our Lord - - - - - 64

XXV. She is cured of her illness by the prayers of the nuns - - - - - - - - - 67

XXVI. She begs to remain in the noviceship, and abounds more than ever in acts of virtue - 69

XXVII. What occurred to a lay-sister in the noviceship in connexion with Sister Mary Magdalene - 72

XXVIII. Of the innumerable raptures and ecstasies of St. Mary Magdalene, and of their different modes 74

XXIX. Of the various circumstances and modes of these raptures - - - - - - - 77

XXX. How she was assured that her raptures were of God, and not an effect of diabolical illusion and of natural causes - - - - - 82

XXXI. She predicts future events in the spirit of prophecy - - - - - - - - - 86

XXXII. This holy mother sees things distant and absent 101

XXXIII. She discerns hidden thoughts and the secrets of hearts - - - - - - - - 104

XXXIV. She sees the state of many souls in Paradise, Purgatory, and hell - - - - - - 111

CHAPTER PAGE

XXXV. Of other favours and graces which the holy virgin received from God in her ecstasies and raptures - - - - - - - 124

XXXVI. Of various miracles performed by this holy virgin during her life - - - - - 132

XXXVII. She receives from God a command to live only on bread and water, which she executes after a probation by the superiors - - 145

XXXVIII. God appoints her time for sleeping and manner of dressing, which she adopts after probation by her superiors - - - - - - 148

XXXIX. She is tried by God for five years with many temptations - - - - - - - 152

XL. She is in various ways afflicted and tormented by the devils - - - - - - 159

XLI. Of the arms used by the saint to resist temptations and overcome her enemies - - - 168

XLII. After a probation of five years, she, by the good pleasure of God, performs a penance of fifty days, and is then with joy and recompense delivered from the den of lions - - - 179

XLIII. Of the various offices filled by this holy junior, and of the virtues of her mistress, Mother Vangelista del Giocondo - - - - 185

XLIV. Of the mode in which she governed the juniors and novices, and the instructions which she gave them - - - - - - - - 189

XLV. Continuation of the same subject - - - 204

XLVI. Of her great esteem for religion and the religious state - - - - - - - - 215

XLVII. Of her great love to God and to Jesus her Spouse 229

XLVIII. Of her constant and ardent desire of holy Communion, and her anxiety that others should worthily receive it - - - - - 240

XLIX. Of her charity towards her neighbours, her zeal for their salvation, and the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in which she exercised that charity - - - - - - - 250

L. Of her zeal and charity for the sisters of her monastery - - - - - - - - 256

LI. Of an examen of conscience which she made in rapture, by which we may form an idea of her purity of spirit - - - - - 267

CHAPTER PAGE

LII. Rules for a holy life, which the saint received from Jesus when in ecstasy - - - - 273
LIII. A spiritual exercise which she daily performed, with an oblation of herself to God - - 277
LIV. Of her most deep humility - - - - 285
LV. Of the virtue and vow of obedience - - - 303
LVI. Of her perfect religious poverty - - - 310
LVII. Of her wonderful observance of the vow of chastity - - - - - - - 320
LVIII. Of the prayer and contemplation of the saint - 331
LIX. Some affections and profitable intelligences drawn from the contemplation of the saint - 338
LX. Devout sentiments on the mystery of the burial of Christ and the Assumption of the B. Virgin 342
LXI. Of the austerity with which she macerated her body by voluntary penances - - - - 354
LXII. Through her great desire of suffering for the love of God she renounces all spiritual enjoyment, and God promises her pure suffering, which she generously endures in the last years of her life - - - - - - 357
LXIII. She continues in pure suffering during her last sickness and holy death - - - - 363
LXIV. Of her obsequies, the concourse and devotion of the people, and of her burial - - - 368
LXV. Of the fame of her sanctity, and of her body found fragrant and incorrupt - - - 370
LXVI. Miracles wrought by the saint during her life - 373
LXVII. Miracles performed by our saint after death - 377
LXVIII. Of the beatification of the saint, and the oil miraculously increased - - - - 382
LXIX. Many miracles performed by the oil miraculously increased at the festival of the beatification of the saint - - - - - 388
LXX. Miracles wrought and graces conferred through the intercession of the saint, and by the application of her relics, and the invocation of her name and assistance - - - - 399
LXXI. Of the veneration with which the incorrupted body of the saint was regarded, and of the fame of her sanctity - - - - - 424
LXXII. Of her solemn canonization - - - - 427

THE LIFE

OF THE

SERAPHIC VIRGIN,

ST. MARY MAGDALENE OF PAZZI.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE OF THE SAINT.

The seraphic virgin, St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, was the daughter of Sigr. Camillo Geri de' Pazzi, and Sig. Maria di Lorenzo Buondelmonti; both of whose families were distinguished for their rank and antiquity. This blessed child was born on April 2nd, 1566, and on the following day was baptised in the oratory of St. John the Baptist, the general baptistery of the citizens of Florence. Signor Pandolfo Strozzi and Signora Fiammetta Minerbetti, were her sponsors at the baptismal font, where she received the name of Caterina. Her mother declared, that whilst pregnant with this daughter she had never suffered the least pain nor inconvenience. Nor had she any difficulty in bringing her up, for from her infancy she was most obedient

to her and to all the household, being naturally obliging and readily yielding to the will of those who governed her. In her childhood she took no pleasure in the plays and trivial amusements common to her age, but displayed such intelligence and maturity of understanding, that the other children who came to the house did not presume to address her; for her countenance, though most benign and pleasing, was marked by a modest composure which inspired them with veneration and awe.

CHAPTER II.

OF HER DELIGHT IN ALMSGIVING, AND IN HEARING OTHERS SPEAK OF GOD.

Caterina, when a little girl, was sent to school to the Poor Nuns, and, as is usual, her breakfast and luncheon were placed in a little basket which she was to carry with her. But she never touched this provision, for on passing the prisons, where the poor prisoners were asking alms, she with great delight gave them the contents of her basket for the love of God; and when at home, if she heard any beggar asking an alms, she was glad to bestow it with her own hands; whilst her parents saw with pleasure these early indications of a merciful disposition.

She had not attained her seventh year, when she began to take pleasure in listening to conversations relating to God and a future life.

Her mother and her aunt, Signora Margherita Panciatici de' Buondelmonti, being both very spiritual persons and frequent communicants, often conversed on such subjects; and Caterina, when aware of the nature of their discourse, would instantly listen with the most fixed attention. Her mother sometimes said, "Go, child, and walk a little." She then rose and went in obedience, but presently returned again to her post, and sitting down by their side, seemed as though she could not withdraw from them.

She subsequently declared when grown up, that she had been induced to do this from a strong feeling of enjoyment and consolation, though her early age did not permit her to understand much of their conversation. Her mother also said, that during this early period of her childhood, Caterina frequently interrogated her on such high theological points, that she was obliged to silence her, as at that time they far surpassed her understanding.

CHAPTER III.

OF HER DEVOTION TO THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, AND THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

At this stage of her childhood, the heart and affections of Caterina were by a sweet constraint attracted in devotion to the most Holy Trinity, so that her questions to religious and spiritual persons who came in her way, were

chiefly concerning that sacred mystery. One day, whilst turning over the leaves of a little office of the Blessed Virgin, she found the creed of St. Athanasius, in which that most holy mystery is explained. Her heart was instantly rapt in wonderful devotion, and she read through the whole creed with indescribable delight, though not understanding its meaning; and then with great glee, as though she had discovered some precious jewel, she carried it to her mother, that she also might read it; a clear indication that God had, by special prerogative, chosen this soul for Himself.

She had also at the same age an ardent desire for the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and it seemed to her as though the time which must pass before she should be of an age to receive it was a thousand years. God impressed on her soul a high perception of the esteem with which that divine Food should be regarded; and when her mother communicated, as she frequently did, the little girl would walk round her, sit by her side, and on her dress, never going from her during the day. In surprise her mother asked why she did so, when she replied, "My mother, you breathe of Jesus, you smell of Jesus;" for she inhaled the perfume of the Divine Sacrament which her mother had that morning received.

The love which she had for this heavenly food, this Bread of Angels, was further displayed in this, that being by her age incapable of receiving as she would have desired, she at least

desired to see others receive, and therefore besought her mother to take her on the festivals to the Jesuits' church of San Giovanni, where the whole family confessed and communicated: and there she would remain for three or four hours together, watching the communicants, after which she would return home quite consoled.

CHAPTER IV.

OF HER VOLUNTARY APPLICATION TO PRAYER, HER LOVE OF RETIREMENT, AND DISLIKE OF VAIN SHOWS.

It was certainly wonderful that a little child, hardly eight years of age, having read no books, nor received any oral instructions, should by the simple instinct and interior impulse of the Holy Ghost, addict herself to, and be attracted towards the exercise of prayer, though entirely ignorant of the method of performing it. Caterina voluntarily sought retirement, avoided all conversation, and spoke little, though in that little she manifested great prudence. She had great pleasure in keeping silence, that she might maintain her soul in more perfect union with God. Her mother, who marked all her proceedings, observed this with admiration, and as she was her only daughter, she not only loved her tenderly, but seeing her graced and adorned by so many natural and supernatural gifts and rare virtues, she might almost have been said to have respected her.

When her relatives or other ladies came to the house, Caterina would come directly at her mother's bidding, and having quickly paid her respects to them, would fly back to her solitude. The house was situated in the Corso, and on the feast of St. John and at other times of the year, many ladies came to witness the running at the ring; but nothing could induce Caterina to look out of the window at the show. On the contrary, she would steal away to the most private rooms in the house, and there in prayer would open her heart to God, from whom she received many favours. Once, in particular, she was wonderfully consoled by God after having been all day behind a door praying, without having been discovered by any one. At another time when the domestics had by the mother's orders been long looking for her in vain, she was at last found concealed behind a bed, her senses being so much abstracted and absorbed in God, that she neither heard, saw, nor moved, but seemed as though she were wholly transformed into God. The children, who accompanied their mothers to the house to see the running at the ring, said that when their breakfast was given them, Caterina never took her's with them, nor even left her room; but that frequently when they looked for her she was not to be found, or was found on her knees in prayer.

When questioned in after years concerning the instinct which had led her to act thus, at an age when she had no instructor, she said that at that time she had felt herself interiorly

attracted to prayer, but that as she knew not how to practise it, she had placed herself on her knees with the thought and intention of seeking God, simply that she might do His holy will. In this way she had found Him, and when from want of instruction she was sometimes unable to concentrate her thoughts or to apply them well, she humbled herself, and with tears bewailed what she deemed her unworthiness in the presence of God. She was composed and comforted by these acts of humiliation and compunction, resigning herself without care or anxiety to the Divine will, and though at first frequently tried by aridity of spirit, she did not on that account desist from prayer, but persevered in her devotion during the whole time which she had proposed to herself, and at last became consoled and satisfied.

CHAPTER V.

OF HER EARLY TEMPERANCE, HER ZEAL FOR THE HONOUR OF GOD, AND HER DESIRE TO INSTRUCT LITTLE CHILDREN IN THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HOLY FAITH.

This good child united virtuous actions to the prayers mentioned above; and first she was especially abstinent in her food, for when at table she hardly took sufficient nourishment. When fruits were placed on the table, which are so attractive to children in general, she im-

mediately rose, nor would she take even a single fruit for her refreshment during the whole day; but on the contrary, when in the country, where ladies in the summer took melons and other fruits for their collation, she, though invited and even affectionately pressed to take some, would touch nothing of the kind. When at table she left the most delicate meats untasted, abstaining from whatever was most palatable to her, and eating so little of the rest, that her mother said she did not know how her daughter was supported. Whilst staying in the country, the family was going to hear mass, it being a feast day, and as it was raining, and the Church was at some distance, her parents ordered that she should first take her breakfast, and then go on horseback. On hearing this Caterina began to weep bitterly, and entreated for the love of God that she might not be compelled to do this; saying that it did not appear reverent to her to take her breakfast before hearing mass; and that it was unseemly to use the accommodation of a horse when going to seek Jesus; and they were obliged to satisfy her.

Her zeal for the honour of God was surprising at that early age. If she heard any one swear, or utter any words offensive to God, her grief was so great that she could hardly restrain her tears. Once especially having heard some expressions which were equally offensive to God and her neighbour, she was so deeply afflicted that she could not sleep, but spent the whole night in weeping.

This same zeal for the honour of God, and the salvation of her neighbour, led her when she found an opportunity, to instruct little children, teaching them the Pater, Ave, and Credo, and when her father removed to his country-house, for the enjoyment of his gardens, as the Florentines are wont to do in the summer, Caterina assembled ten or twelve of the little villagers, both boys and girls, and instructed them in the Christian doctrine, and the principles of our holy faith. To encourage them in their learning, she by her mother's permission, gave alms to the little boys, and aprons and handkerchiefs to the girls, whilst the fervour and patience with which she engaged in this work of charity, were the admiration of every one. When the time was come for their return to the city, the good girl began to weep bitterly, and on being questioned by her mother as to the cause of her tears, replied that she was crying because she could no longer teach these poor little girls Christian doctrine. To console her, her parents took back to Florence the daughter of one of their labourers, named Giovanna, that Caterina might still instruct her. This girl remained many years as a servant in the family, and communicated many particulars respecting the early life of Caterina. It was noticed that when the little children went to Caterina for instruction in Christian doctrine, she embraced them with great warmth and tenderness, and the reason being asked, she said, "Because their innocence and purity represent

Jesus to me at that early age." This feeling continued throughout her whole life, so that whenever she looked on children, she would gaze on them with much pleasure, and speak to them with great affability, not only because they represented to her the Infant Jesus, but because they had never offended God; and she desired that they might never lose their innocence and purity.

CHAPTER VI.

SHE IS ORDERED BY HER CONFESSOR TO MEDITATE ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST; THE DESIRE OF SUFFERING FOR CHRIST IS KINDLED IN HER HEART; THE MEANS BY WHICH SHE ACCOMPLISHED THIS DESIRE.

After her return to the city, just as she had entered on her ninth year, her mother's confessor, Father Andrea Rossi, S. J., discovering her capacity for mental prayer, and her devotion to the exercise, gave her a book of meditations on the Passion, written by Father Gaspar Loarte of the same society, saying, "My child, read the points of the meditation in this book; then repeat the antiphon, 'Veni Creator Spiritus,' with the prayer to the Holy Ghost on your knees. Repeat also the Confiteor, and with lively feeling and devotion begin to consider the points, giving yourself up to the guidance of God." This was all the instruction given her

by her confessor in the method of prayer. The good child received this instruction with great devotion, and that she might punctually comply with the injunction of her spiritual father, rose every morning early, and prostrating herself, began her meditation with the utmost devotion. Her deep interior contemplation of the mysteries of the Passion, which left her all absorbed in Jesus, soon kindled in her soul a strong desire to imitate and suffer for Him, who with such love had suffered for her. From the time that she received this order from her director, she never omitted an hour's meditation on the Passion every morning, and by this method of meditation was subsequently elevated to the highest transports and raptures, as we shall hereafter relate. She declared that in these meditations she suffered neither weariness nor distraction, unless it were from the thought of becoming a nun, which had from her infancy occupied her by day and by night. Before kneeling down to begin her prayer, she dressed herself as a nun, put a veil on, made a scapular, and was delighted to see herself thus attired. This, she said, sometimes occasioned distraction. Besides this, she sometimes prayed in the open air, exposed to the rain and sun without feeling the slightest inconvenience. So great was her desire for meditation that she would rise very early in the morning to practise it, and as she was often found thus occupied by one of her attendants, named Angelica, she entreated her, for the love of God, not to tell her mother

that she had found her at that hour, lest she should be forbidden to continue her practice. She was not content with praying herself, but tried to induce her servants to do the same, helping them to sweep the rooms, make the beds, and do the other menial work of the house, in order that having sooner finished their work, they might have time for prayer with her. The fruit derived by this little girl from her meditation on the Passion of the Saviour, was an ardent thirst and desire of suffering something for the love of the Incarnate Word; so that in the time of winter she begged one of her servants not to warm her bed, but to say nothing about it to her mother; and sometimes she would conceal herself in a retired place, and take a discipline. Once she secretly took some thorny branches of the wild orange, and of them wreathed a crown of thorns, which she bound firmly round her head before going to bed in the evening. The punctures prevented sleep, and she passed the night in extreme suffering, solely that she might imitate Jesus crowned with sharp thorns.

She also made a cincture with these sharp thorns, which her servants often found under the mattresses. This she at night girded on her bare flesh, and in many other ways she tried to afflict her body and to mortify herself. She would after remove her mattresses, and sleep on the pailliasse, and sometimes would sleep kneeling with her head resting on the bed. But her mother being made acquainted with these

practices, made her sleep with her for the future, saying that had she let her alone, she would have spent the whole night in prayer and penances.

CHAPTER VII.

AT TEN YEARS OF AGE SHE COMMUNICATES FOR THE FIRST TIME. HER VOW OF PERPETUAL VIRGINITY.

This little girl had barely completed her tenth year, when Father Andrea Rossi, her confessor, considering her great capacity and the ardent desire which from an infant she had felt for the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, thought fit to allow her to make her first communion, to which he sent her after having instructed her in the manner of receiving this glorious Sacrament. The joy of this blessed child was indescribable, as was her gratitude to God for so great a blessing. She deemed herself the happiest creature in the world, and during her days of preparation thought and spoke of nothing else but of this adorable Sacrament.

Having prepared herself by many prayers and penances, she, with most extraordinary dispositions on the 25th of March, 1576, the day of the incarnation of the Eternal Word in the womb of Mary, first approached the holy table in the Jesuits' church of San Giovannino, and having received her Divine Guest with the greatest possible reverence and devotion, and with her heart's entire affection, she in one moment felt herself

filled by such interior joy and consolation through the communication of the Incarnate Word to her soul, that she was afterwards wont to say that she had never experienced any joy like this; and so much was she enamoured of this heavenly and living Bread, that she had ever after an ardent desire to receive it often, and having declared her desire to her father confessor, he, knowing her great purity and light, and how acceptable she was to God, granted her permission to communicate every eight days. Throughout the week she counted the days, greatly desiring the arrival of the morning for communion, and when it came she wept for joy. A few days after, on the 19th of April in the same year, 1576, having just entered on her eleventh year, and being in the above-named church of San Giovannino on Holy Thursday, whilst considering the great love displayed by Jesus for man in continuing with His Church to the end of the world, for the food, refreshment, and comfort of our souls in this august Sacrament; she felt an earnest desire to make some offering to God in thanksgiving for such great love, and as it occurred to her that she had nothing to offer which would be more acceptable to God than her virginity, inspired from above, she with all promptitude and fervour consecrated herself to God by a vow of perpetual chastity, and this vow was so acceptable to God, that she was afterwards shown in an ecstasy, that on the day of her making it the Lord had placed a most precious ring on her finger, thus declaring her to be His beloved spouse.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF HER VIRTUES. HER LOVE OF GOD INCREASES WITH HER YEARS. THE REWARDS ASSIGNED TO HER GOOD WORKS.

Caterina continued daily to increase in virtue, ever aiming at an entire conformity to, and perfect union with her Divine Spouse. Every created object which met her eyes, the sky, the earth, the fields, served as a step by which her thoughts ascended in more fervent devotion to her Beloved. She could not, if she would, conceal the flame which glowed in her heart, but was constrained to express it by gestures, words, and actions. Once in particular, when in her thirteenth year she was staying at her father's villa, on St. Andrew's day, being with her mother for recreation in a pleasant meadow, either the serenity of the day, the view of the sky and the extensive landscape, or the verdure of the meadow itself, so elevated her thoughts and affections to God, that she was suddenly struck by her Divine Spouse with such an arrow of love as to feel her heart wounded, most sweetly indeed, but so powerfully, that concealment was impossible, and becoming at once speechless and breathless, she showed by exterior symptoms the wound received within.

Her mother having never before seen her so affected, supposed it to be some bodily ailment,

and leading her into the house, began to apply restoratives; but these being of course unavailing, she soon perceived by certain indications that this was no natural malady, and desisted in astonishment, though to spare Caterina she would not appear to understand the matter. She however noted it down, and named it some years after to the mother prioress, when her daughter took the religious habit. That this was an excess of divine love, was afterwards declared by the saint herself in rapture, September 1598, when experiencing similar impressions, she uttered these words, "O Love, what Thou makest me now to feel, resembles Thy communication on that feast of him (St. Andrew) who so dearly loved Thy cross, when I was yet unconsecrated to Thee in religion, and which my mother regarded as a bodily ailment!" That all the acts of devotion performed by this blessed little girl in her childhood were most pleasing to God, may be gathered from an ecstasy with which she was favoured on the feast of the Circumcision, January 1st, 1590, in which she joyfully enumerated some precious gifts merited in her childhood, which Jesus then showed her reserved for her in Paradise. Some of these she named aloud, and in particular the following: In reward of the zeal with which, as related above, she had for a whole night bewailed an offence against God and her neighbour, there was laid up for her in heaven an ornament resembling a beautiful flame-coloured robe. For her acts of temperance and mortification in depriving herself of fruit and

dainties, there was prepared for her a table of silver, laden with the richest and most costly provisions. For her watchful care of that virginal purity which she had consecrated to God by vow, Jesus showed her that He would give her in Paradise a pair of silver bracelets, set with precious jewels; and so for all her acts of virtue rewards were prepared, too numerous to be named here.

In her rapture she showed much surprise, that the acts which she had thought so trifling and insignificant should be so liberally rewarded by God. From this we may learn the most useful lesson, to bear in mind the truth, that the slightest action performed for the love of God is highly esteemed and greatly rewarded by Him, and if we reflect, we shall find innumerable opportunities of daily making interior and exterior acts of virtue, by which we shall acquire a precious treasure in heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

SHE IS PLACED BY HER PARENTS IN THE MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN.

When Caterina was in her fourteenth year, her father, Signor Camillo, being about to leave Florence, in order to assume the government of the city of Cortona, intended to take his family with him, and by the advice of Father Pietro Blanca, rector of the Jesuits' college, who in the

absence of Father Andrea Rossi, had become the confessor of himself and his family, he determined to place Caterina in some monastery. One of his cousins was in the venerable monastery of San Giovanni, a sister of the Cavaleresse, so named because they wore the habit and were subject to the order of the Knights of Malta. He therefore selected that convent as the place of his daughter's abode, committing her to the care of this lady, who was called Sister Selvaggia Morelli. The mother of Caterina greatly felt this separation from her daughter, whom she would have wished to take with her; but the daughter, though most tenderly loving her mother, was willing to part from her for the sake of entering the monastery, where she hoped to find greater freedom and convenience for her prayers and devotions. But before her entrance, Father Pietro Blanca, who well knew her perfection and purity, stipulated with the nuns that she should be permitted to communicate at least every Sunday and festival day, at her pleasure. To this they agreed, but after her entrance disturbances arose, as some did not think it well for a young girl of fourteen to practise such constant retirement as that to which she was led by the frequent reception of the Sacraments, it not being then the custom of that house to communicate so frequently. Caterina, however, who had entered with great fervour, firmly persisted in her retirement and usual communions, and allowed them to make what remarks they pleased, thanking God for giving

her something to suffer for His love. She was often in prayer for hours together, and on Ascension Day, whilst in purity of heart she was meditating in a retired part of the monastery, she received so clear a light from God, and so vivid a perception of the Divine Goodness, that she could hardly sustain the plenitude of her interior joy and consolation.

CHAPTER X.

THE TESTIMONY GIVEN BY THE NUNS OF SAN GIOVANNI TO THE LIFE WHICH CATERINA LED WHILST WITH THEM.

That the deportment of Caterina in that venerable monastery may be better understood, I shall here give an abstract of a deposition juridically made during the processes, by three honoured mothers of that house, Sister Selvaggia Morelli, who had charge of her as her mistress, Sister Diamante Mazzinghi, and Sister Faustina Strozzi, who deposed as follows:

"In the year 1580, Caterina, daughter of Signor Camillo de' Pazzi, was at the age of fourteen placed as a pensioner in our monastery, where she remained fifteen months; her father having been sent by the Grand Duke to the government of Cortona. During her stay she gave a most excellent example to all. She was very devout and much addicted to mental prayer, in which she constantly spent two hours in the

morning and one in the evening; besides which, she frequently retired during the day for prayer, and rose privately in the night for the same purpose, her couch being in the chamber of her mistress. She every Saturday took the gospel appointed for the following Sunday, and drew from it two or three points at her choice, on which she meditated during the week.

"She frequently came into choir with us to the Divine Office, even at night to Matins; and when not permitted to do this by her mistress, she would at least rise, and continue in prayer till the time of mass, and so completely did she concentrate her mind and affections in God, as frequently to be abstracted from all sensible things. One of us one day found her in her chamber alone, and said to her, 'Caterina, are you here all alone?' She instantly replied, 'O how can I be alone?' wishing to imply that though none of us were with her, she was not alone, but well accompanied when conversing with God in prayer. Whilst praying in the choir, she was fixed and immoveable as a statue, and her countenance changed and glowed like a rose, whilst her eyes became bright and sparkling like two most splendid stars. There was something so angelic in her face, as to cause us all to gaze on her with admiration; for, seeing her devotion and good qualities, we were never weary of observing her. Most glad should we have been to have been always in her society, for her conversation was that of an angel, and she was so lovely that we never seemed to be satisfied

with seeing, hearing, and conversing with her. We earnestly wished her to take the habit in our monastery, for though she was very young, we greatly hoped that by her instrumentality our monastery would be brought to a perfect observance of community, respecting which she was most anxious. We lamented then as we do now, and shall continue to lament, that she did not remain with us. She spent much time in reading spiritual books, especially the Meditations, Manual, and Soliloquies of St. Augustine, and other similar works. The good child exhorted us to frequent communion, and as she herself made more frequent communions than we, she induced us by her example and words to ask the superior's permission to communicate every Sunday and holiday, and thus through her, the custom of frequent communion was introduced, and is observed in our monastery to this day. Caterina never conversed with the young secular pensioners, but with the sick nuns, whom she often visited with great charity, reading spiritual books to them, and consoling them not only by kind words, but by conversations relating to the things of God, which she especially addressed to those most likely to be drawn to prayer, frequent communion, and a more retired life. From her mouth there never proceeded an idle or vain word, and she was never seen to use a gesture which expressed levity. She was, on the contrary, the enemy of all vanity. Her dress was most simple, and she had no taste for head-dresses, and the things usually worn by

girls. She was never angry, nor ever displeased, excepting when her mistress ordered her to take an egg or some other restorative on account of indisposition; in this case she obeyed, but with evident reluctance and unwillingness. However, she never resisted any command, but on all other occasions obeyed with pleasure and alacrity. She took in good part whatever she saw and heard of her neighbour, and if any one's fault were mentioned, immediately excused it, defending the individual as well as she could. She was a friend to silence and solitude, and ever spoke of Divine things with great modesty and reverence.

"Her humility led her to employ herself in the meanest offices, such as sweeping the rooms, making the beds, and so on; and she would willingly have done still more had her mistress permitted it. Her low opinion of herself, and her high value of a religious state, were such that she deemed herself unworthy to be amongst us, and was wont to say that we were the spouses of Christ, whilst she only aspired to be so. She lay on a straw mattress, but almost deprived herself of sleep, that she might devote the time to prayer, in which she spent three or four hours successively. She took very little food in general, and this, added to her fasts and disciplines, so entirely exhausted her strength, that when sewing she confessed that she had scarcely power to draw out the needle; and on being asked why she thus voluntarily macerated her body, she replied, 'Not to destroy my constitution, but to

render myself more fit for prayer and union with God.' In short, she abounded in all virtues, and her actions and deportment were our example and admiration, for we knew her to be no ordinary creature, but one of rare excellence, as we had never seen any child resembling her. We often, when speaking of her, would say one to another, 'This will be another St. Gertrude, or St. Catherine of Sienna;' and some of the nuns, though desirous of speaking to her, abstained from doing so through reverence and esteem. Many of us in turn besought her to remain and take the habit with us, for we could not think of losing her, as we hoped that she would be a great blessing to our monastery; and she was promised that should she remain, we would adopt a more strict and regular observance, and a life of community, which was what she desired in us; but she replied, that we should pray to God to enlighten and inspire her for the best, and that she would do the same, but that for her own part she desired to enter a house where she should find this strict observance and community of living already introduced, not where it must be begun, for that knowing herself to be more fragile than all others, she must try to secure herself, and not leave the certain for the uncertain. We, in short, were not worthy to retain her, and she left us." This edification and this great movement in the souls of these well-disposed mothers, were produced by the example and exhortations of a young secular girl not more than fifteen years of age!

CHAPTER XI.

SHE IS REMOVED FROM THE MONASTERY AND PLACED IN THE HANDS OF THE PHYSICIANS.

The government of Signor Camillo being at an end, he returned to Florence and removed Caterina from the monastery, in which she had been for fifteen months; and her mother, who eagerly went to take her home, seeing her so changed, emaciated, and wasted, was half dead with grief, and placed her directly in the hands of the physicians, who were of opinion that besides using the prescribed remedies, she should go into the country, saying that after she had taken a little repose there, they would try a preparation of steel.

During this time she endeared herself, by her wonderful goodness and sweetness of manner, to all the household. Every one delighted in being near her, to hear her speak of divine things and listen to her edifying stories of the monastery. Every morning, as she had been ordered, she took a walk in the country after having taken her steel, and her brothers, who greatly delighted in her, always attended her, as well as many ladies, who would have wished to be always conversing with her; but she, to preserve her mind from distraction, begged that they would follow her at a little distance, which they did. Caterina went before them alone, now repeating the rosary

and other vocal prayers, now occupying her mind with heavenly thoughts, disposing and preparing herself for the meditation which she was about to make on her return to the house. On her arrival there she withdrew to her chamber, and spent an hour in mental prayer, no one presuming to disturb her. Under her mother's eye and care, and by the help of air and medicine, Caterina regained in a great measure her lost health and strength; and her course of medicine being ended, they returned to the city.

CHAPTER XII.

SHE DISCLOSES TO HER FATHER HER DESIRE OF BECOMING A NUN, AND SEDULOUSLY TRIES TO WIN HER MOTHER'S CONSENT.

FROM her earliest years Caterina had always desired to consecrate herself to God in the holy state of religion, of which, as has been said, she thought night and day; but fearing that her parents had other views for her, she had never dared to open her heart to them. However, on coming from the monastery, being now sixteen years of age, she perceived that her father and mother had thoughts of marrying her, and dreading lest they should engage their word, she resolved on disclosing her determination. In consequence, having one day most fervently offered herself to God, she took a fitting opportunity, and boldly addressed her father in these words:

"My father, if you desire to do anything with me contrary to the promise which I have already made to Jesus, I tell you firmly that I would rather lose my head than take any other spouse but Him, or resign the intention of entering religion." The father was thunder-struck at these words, and so keenly felt his daughter's firm resolution as immediately to weep before her; but as he feared God, he thought no more of marrying her, and gave her no more disturbance. There was, however, another person who reproved and mortified her by contemptuous words, ridiculing her retired and spiritual life, whilst she, receiving the mortification without reply, retired to her chamber, and kneeling before an image of the Blessed Virgin, prayed for the person who despised her, and thanked the Lord for having given her that little to suffer for His sake; and whilst she thus prayed God imparted to her abundant spiritual consolation. It remained for her to gain the consent of her mother, who greatly, indeed unspeakably, loved her, delighted in her presence, always wished her to be at her side, to enjoy her conversation, to mark her wise words; every expression, gesture, and look being to her maternal heart a new motive of regard. Besides all this, she hoped that this, her only daughter, being so accomplished in all respects, would make a great figure in the world, in which she meant to establish her, so that it would be very difficult to divert her from her purpose. Nevertheless, Caterina, confident in God and commending herself to Him, considered

in what way she could best subvert her mother's designs. And first, though she greatly loved her mother, she resolved with holy policy to do violence to herself by suppressing the manifestation of her affection, and therefore dexterously began to shun her conversation and society. Wherefore her mother on many occasions complained that she had never enjoyed this daughter, as she had never permitted her to do so. Besides this, she would not gratify her mother by taking walks and recreations with her, as she desired, and still less would she adopt her taste in dressing after the prevailing fashion, or in wearing rich and noble garments, according to her rank. On the contrary, she would dress herself so simply as to be proposed by mothers as an example to their vain daughters.

Her mother at that time had a beautiful white robe made for her, and on the first time of wearing it she did not cease to weep, not thinking it right that one who desired to dedicate herself to the service of God in religion should dress in a manner calculated to attract the eyes of men. Her mother having taken her in this dress to the grate of the monastery in which she had been a pensioner, one of the mothers, seeing her thus attired, supposed that her parents were thinking of giving her in marriage, and began to speak to her on the subject in a way which she thought would please her; but the good girl, who had other thoughts, was so distressed at her words that she almost fainted, and was nearly

falling, and would have done so had she not been supported by a relation who was by her side.

Besides this, when her mother called her to her and questioned her on her meditation, that she might hear her converse, she no longer gratified her, and appeared distressed and dissatisfied. She never smiled nor spoke, her food did not nourish her, and the more she was caressed by her mother, the more she shunned her, seeming to take no pleasure in anything. In short, she appeared rude in everything, though naturally most amiable, affable, and agreeable, so that in affecting rudeness, she did herself great violence. But all this was done with the view of detaching from herself her mother's tender love, so that she might not prevent her from becoming a nun, and in the end, she, after a short time, accomplished her desire.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHE OBTAINS HER MOTHER'S PERMISSION TO BECOME A NUN.

As God never abandons those who really desire to serve Him in the religious state, so He was pleased to console Caterina, and to aid her in accomplishing her design. She soon saw the happy results of the means which she had used to conquer maternal love by the love of God; for Signora Maria, considering the retired and spiritual life which her daughter had led from her

infancy, her devotion and frequent communion, and having once discovered in her not only an indifference to worldly things, but even an abhorrence of all gaieties and pleasures, began to think that God had chosen her for Himself, and to feel that she could not without remorse of conscience divert her by force from her design of becoming a nun. She saw her becoming more and more distressed and discontented, and fearing that should this last, she would be attacked by some latent disease, she in this struggle between the scruples of her conscience and the affection for her daughter, resolved to name the matter to Father Pietro Blanca, her confessor, who was well acquainted with the spirit and resolution of the young person; and being fully assured by him that Caterina would never be induced to take any other spouse than Jesus, because she felt an interior inspiration from God, which called her to the religious state, and wished to correspond with her vocation; also, that her dejection and change of manner towards herself proceeded from no other cause than the seeing herself so far from her pious desires; being, moreover, assured by her confessor, that it would be sinful to take her daughter from the service of God in order to establish her in the world; Signora Maria at last, with great violence to her maternal love, resolved to deprive herself of her daughter, and to yield her to God, thus giving her pleasure and content. Returning home, she called Caterina aside, asking her what was her wish, and how she meant to dispose of herself,

and hearing that she persisted in her design of serving God in religion, she said to her, "Since this is your wish, be it so. I will not hinder you, but suffer you to do as you please, and as God inspires you."

Words cannot describe the joy and exultation of Caterina when her mother thus declared her will and expressed her final determination. After having thanked her with affectionate and grateful words, she left her, sad and weeping, and joyfully retired to her own room, where, on her knees, she tenderly thanked God for the favour and victory obtained, offering and dedicating herself to Him as His least little handmaid, with the determination of serving and loving so great a Lord with all the fervour of her heart, and desiring nothing more than speedily to leave the world, that she might sooner enter the haven of her wishes. The joy of her spirit at the good news which she had heard, soon benefitted her bodily health. She speedily regained her colour and her strength, and revived so much that she seemed to have had no illness. Her manner towards all was again most amiable, only she still was somewhat reserved with her mother, lest she should again attach herself to her, and thus suffer more in parting from her.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE MONASTERIES WHICH PLEASED CATERINA, AND HOW SHE CHOSE THAT OF SANTA MARIA DEGL' ANGELI, FOR HER PLACE OF TRIAL: A FULL ACCOUNT OF THAT MONASTERY.

As the parents of Caterina had been induced to permit her to take the habit, by the advice and exhortations of the father-rector of the Society of Jesus, they now wished the same father to specify the monastery, which, amongst the many well-regulated religious houses of Florence, he should judge most fit for the young person. After having extolled many, he at last said that knowing the inclinations of their daughter, he thought that either the Dominican Convent of the Crocetta, or the Carmelite monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, would best suit her desires. Caterina herself said that for various reasons she was particularly attracted to three houses. The monastery of St. Clare was the first she named, in which the rigid poverty and disappropriation greatly pleased her, and the austere life and mean habit of the nuns, as it seemed to her that this habit and abject manner of life must excite in the religious humility and contempt of the world. Still greater was her attraction to the monastery of the Crocetta, in which those who have once entered, are seen no more, nor can ever again behold the face of seculars; which was

esteemed by her an excellent method of preserving recollection of mind, detachment from relatives and persons of the world, and an efficacious help to union with God. But as she heard the father-rector highly praise the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, not only for the perfect observance of life in community, and especial regard to interior perfection, but also for the daily communions which were made there, she decided on entering that monastery on trial.

This monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, was founded by four noble Florentines, named Innocenza Bartoli, Sarra Lapaccini, a widow, her daughter Madalena, a virgin, and Anna Davanzati. These four pious ladies, being led by the Holy Spirit and a fervent devotion to the Most Holy Virgin Mother of God, on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15th, 1450, publicly took the Carmelite habit in the church of the Carmelite Fathers of St. Fridian, and after their clothing led a most holy and exemplary life in their own houses, being styled the Sisters of the Virgin Mary. The news of this act soon spread through the city, to the great admiration of the citizens. Other females, led by their example, demanded the same habit, and on the Feast of the Assumption, 1453, two virgins were clothed, belonging to the families of Filippi and Chellini. Sister Innocenza then went to reside with these in a house which had been given her, near the Carmelite Church above-mentioned, and in a short time their community so greatly increased that they took the

form of a monastery, assuming the name of "Nuns of Santa Maria degl' Angeli," a name which was given to the monastery subsequently built in that place. They then began to live under the rule of the Carmelites, and under the government of one sister, whom they styled the prioress, and ever after observed a most strict and holy life of community, which to this day is so perfectly maintained, that no one of the sisters retains the smallest property whatever, but all is absorbed in the common possessions of the monastery, from which the superior provides for all wants, as well common as individual, and for all the offices, to which the officials give nothing but their labour. For the rest, all is supplied by the monastery, and no individual nun can sell, buy, give, or receive, anything whatever, or in any way undertake the management of money. Food, clothing, and all other necessaries for health and sickness are provided for them, so that they are not obliged to take any thought concerning such things. This house was placed under the care of the Ordinary by Leo X. in the year 1560, by an especial brief, confirmed by another of Pius V., in the year 1567. Its Constitution was reformed after the Council of Trent, and confirmed by Paul IV. 1564, and finally by Paul V. 1610, was at their own request reduced to a more strict and rigorous observance. At present they observe this order. Young persons, having finished their year of probation, make their profession, after which they remain three years in the noviceship, in the charge of the

mistress of novices. From the noviceship, they pass to the Juniorate, under the care of the mistress of the juniors, where they stay another three years without engaging in any of the exercises of the nuns, to whom they are not even allowed to speak without permission, their cells and oratory being separate. Here they practise various devotions and penances. From the juniorate, they go to the Upper Juniorate, under the care of the sub-prioress, who is their particular mistress, so that for ten years at least they are under the care of particular mistresses. They never take children as pensioners, or for education, well knowing that the doing so occasions great disturbance in a religious house, with danger of relaxation. They live in peculiar seclusion from the visits and conversations of seculars at the grates, and having nothing to do with the world, attend in their monastery to their offices and exercises, to prayer and frequent communions, and to the acquisition of virtue and religious perfection. In this manner the house has been always maintained in strict observance, and held in great esteem and veneration by all the citizens, having produced the fruits of great virtue, sanctity, and perfection. It has ever been and is still distinguished by the nobility of its sisters, many of whom are of the first families in Florence, and at present it numbers amongst its members the two nieces of his Holiness, Pope Urban VIII., the daughters of Signor Don Carlos Barberini and Donna Costanza Magalotti, the brother and sister-in-

law of the Pope, who selected this house from the high celebrity of its rigid religious observance. There are at present nearly eighty veiled and lay-sisters in the monastery, leading an edifying religious life, and under excellent spiritual and temporal direction, the archbishops having always provided them with zealous and exemplary directors.

This monastery has also received much help from the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, for at the request of Prince Cosmo de' Medici and his consort Donna Eleanora of Toledo, St. Ignatius in 1551 sent Father Giacomo Lainez and some other fathers from Rome and Padua to found a college as their Highnesses desired. These fathers not having any residence assigned them, hired a small house near the monastery, which was at this time in want of an ordinary confessor. Through the exertions of a pious lady named Marietta Gondi, who was greatly attached to the religious, these fathers were induced to undertake the temporary direction of the monastery, a charge which was of no inconvenience to them, as the church in which they preached and administered the sacraments was very near, so that they were able to take the entire charge of the nuns.

They therefore began to confess and instruct them, and as they were fathers of great spiritual attainments, they confirmed them in the perfect observance of rule, and excited an increase of fervour in the monastery, leading the sisters to the use of prayer, frequent communion, and the

spirit and exercise of mortification, and they had time to do this, for they continued in this office during the whole year 1552. However, as the society does not undertake the direction of nuns, the good fathers took a scruple at continuing so long in this employment, and wrote to St. Ignatius to know his pleasure, when two nuns of the house, Sisters Dianora and Vittoria Contugi, whose father was then physician to Pope Julius III., through his means obtained from his holiness permission for the fathers to remain, which, with the consent of St. Ignatius, they did till the year 1553. In that year the ground now occupied by the college and church of St. Giovanni, (called from its size San Giovannino,) being assigned them, they ceased to be the ordinary confessors of the monastery. The good mothers ever retained the most grateful attachment to the society, which with corresponding good will has always gladly furnished their extraordinary preachers and confessors. Consequently, the rector, Father Pietro Blanca, was able to give Caterina the most ample information respecting this establishment.

CHAPTER XV.

SHE ENTERS THE MONASTERY OF SANTA MARIA DEGL' ANGELI ON TRIAL. HER DEPORTMENT WHILST THERE.

Having decided on the monastery in which she desired to enter on trial, and obtained the permission of the archbishop, she entered in a secular dress on the Vigil of the Assumption, anno 1582, aged sixteen years, four months and a half. Girls who enter this monastery on trial, usually remain from ten to fifteen days, during which time they are under the care of two mistresses, whose office it is to assist the externs, as these new-comers are called. These are called the mistresses of the externs, one of whom must be a junior and the other a senior nun. Both serve the young persons with great charity, and wait on them by day and night, marking their character, habits, and dispositions, skilfully examining into their aptitude for the institute, and the reality of their desire to consecrate themselves to God; they thus lead them on to the noviceship, where they give them up to the care of the mistress of novices, whose duty it is to instruct them in the regulations, offices, and exercises of the monastery, and to continue the observations on their dispositions and conduct, that she may subsequently, together with the extern mistresses, make her report to the superiors. The extern

mistresses saw at once that Caterina was no ordinary girl. To them she seemed more like a heavenly spirit than a mortal, such was the angelic purity and modesty which shone in all her words, gestures, and conduct, and the singular grace with which all her actions were performed. She was most meek and gentle, humble, obedient, full of charity and virtue ; she never spoke but when addressed, and showed a great desire for the order, of which she spoke with much affection. Her self-possession was shown in the following instance. She was one day taken by the mistresses to the work-room, where the other nuns were engaged. She sat down to sew, and whilst all were observing silence, something fell to the ground with such a loud noise, that the nuns, startled by the unusual sound, all rose in alarm. Caterina alone remained calm, neither raising her head nor lifting her eyes from her work, but seeming to be entirely absorbed in God ; at which the mothers were not a little amazed, and justly, for in these sudden accidents a person cannot easily regulate their first movements, unless they be either naturally very sedate, or of a very mortified spirit, or absolutely plunged in some deep thought or fixed contemplation. She often went to the choir for prayer, as was testified by the sacristan of that day, who frequently found her there. Another young lady of rank, who entered on trial at the same time with Caterina, said, that in the morning, when she and the others rose, they always found Caterina at prayer, which lasted more than an hour,

and she and others declared that she rose from prayer as she knelt down, which she had no sooner done than she became immoveable; nor during the whole time of her prayer did they ever perceive the slightest movement of her head, or any other part of her person, which seemed so difficult a thing to this young person, that to make herself quite sure of the fact, she carefully placed herself behind her, to her great admiration and edification.

Mother Vangelista Del Giocondo, (afterwards her mistress,) said to her one day, "Daughter, if you wish to become a nun, you will not be able to pray as you now do in the world, for you must perform your exercises with the other novices;" to which Caterina replied, with great modesty and reverence, "Mother, I know that whatever is done in religion, under obedience, is in truth a prayer." At which wise reply, that venerable mother was pleased. In short, secular as she was, she manifested extraordinary virtue and perfection, wherefore all desired that she should be clothed in that monastery; whilst she on her part was so satisfied with the rules of the house, and so much edified by the goodness and virtue of the nuns, that she seemed to be in a Paradise, and thought that this religious house was rightly named Santa Maria degl' Angeli, since it was under the protection of Mary, and its inhabitants were like so many angels.

She would have desired to be clothed at once, and nevermore to have left the house, but the ten days being ended, she, in obedience to her parents, was compelled to return home.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON HER RETURN HOME SHE GIVES VARIOUS EXAMPLES OF VIRTUE, AND AT LAST RETURNS TO THE MONASTERY, TO QUIT IT NO MORE.

When Caterina quitted her monastery, it was with the hope of a speedy return, but in this she was disappointed, for she was obliged to remain at home for three months, in order fully to satisfy her parents, who so deeply felt the prospect of a final separation from their daughter, that they deferred it as long as possible, though she with caution urged them to hasten it. During this interval she conducted herself with a prudence and virtue which it would be difficult to describe. She showed herself to be the declared enemy of all pride and vanity, nor would she, even for a day, wear gay clothes, headdresses, or other vain ornaments; but firmly adhered to her usual simple style of dress. One day, when speaking to a noble and virtuous young lady, who had been clothed in the monastery, she said, "I cannot understand how young ladies who truly desire to become religious and spouses of Christ, can find pleasure in seeing themselves covered with fine clothes, jewels, and other frivolous ornaments, in washing their faces with cosmetics, and dressing their hair in curls and braids, going into public with these ornaments." The other replied, that we must not suppose

that this was done to please men, but only for a little human self-gratification, which she simply acknowledged to have been her motive for doing so on the day of her clothing. On hearing this, Caterina did not multiply words, but by a modest and significant smile and gesture, showed that she thought this to be a great fault, that in an act so holy and important, we should take pleasure in similar trifles, and enjoy those vanities which we by that very act profess to despise. On which the young lady, who in all other respects was a good religious, after some reflection, felt great compunction and confusion at what she had done, and implored the forgiveness of God. Besides this, Caterina could never be drawn to see curious and vain sights, nor could they take her to public places ; she would only go with her mother to the churches, and to take leave of such of her relatives as were nuns in different monasteries. At other times she preferred staying at home, not caring to go out except to visit the nuns of her monastery, on which occasions she entreated her mother to hasten her return to them. That her spirit might not become tepid, she never whilst detained at home, gave up her wonted prayers and meditations, nor her frequent reception of the holy Sacraments, and sought retirement, spending her time either in reading good books, reciting the office, and using other prayers, and if at times she was called by her mother to see the outfit prepared for her, and asked if she desired anything else either for herself or as a gift

to the monastery, she left all to her mother's judgment, seeming to have no choice in anything. At length the outfit being completed, and everything prepared to her mother's satisfaction, after having bidden farewell to all her relatives, she on her knees asked the benediction of her parents, and amidst the tender grief and lamentations of all her family, left her father's house, never to return, on the 1st of December, 1582, which was the Saturday before the first Sunday in Advent. She was accompanied to the monastery by her own mother and other ladies related to her, and on her arrival, having again taken leave of her mother and the others, she entered with such alacrity and devotion, and with such a high esteem for the place, that she regarded herself (as she said to a person in confidence) as unworthy to be a sweeper of its pavement, so meanly did she think of herself and so highly of the house of God. As soon as she had entered, whilst her mother was weeping for the loss of a child so dear, two very spiritual ladies who had accompanied her, called the prioress aside, and told her to take note of that girl, for according to their belief she had never yet committed a sin.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF THE PREPARATION AND DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH SHE TOOK THE RELIGIOUS HABIT. HER CHANGE OF NAME.

Caterina remained in the monastery full of joy, reflecting on the great mercy of God in withdrawing her from the world and leading her into holy religion. She was unwearied in praising, blessing, and thanking Him, and in offering herself for His service in that sacred place, and with Him her mind was constantly occupied. Her mother on the contrary returned home afflicted and disconsolate for the loss of this precious jewel, when meeting Signora Maddalena Strozzi in the street, she was asked by the latter what was become of her angel, to which she in tears replied, "You must not speak thus to me; she is indeed a seraph now in that monastery, exulting in the final accomplishment of her wishes."

The nuns were greatly pleased at the acquisition of so good a subject, taking great delight in her, and looking on her as an angel sent from heaven, for her sweet and reverential conversation gained all hearts. They consequently held a chapter for her on the 8th of December, the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, in the year 1582, in which they unanimously accepted her. As her mother could not retain her

child, she desired at least to have her portrait, and previous to her taking the habit sent to the monastery a dress in which she wished her to be taken. At this Caterina was greatly shocked and distressed. Far removed from all vanity, she broke into lamentations, exclaiming, "Is it possible that so mean a creature as I, a little dust and mud, should remain in the world's memory? I am come from the world to return no more, and to be seen no more in this secular garb, and do they now wish me to resume it?" She would at first by no means consent, but on receiving an order from Father Pietro Blanca, her confessor, to do this for the satisfaction of her parents, and being commanded by the prioress to put on the dress and suffer her likeness to be taken, she obeyed. The painter was the famous artist Santi di Tito, but as Caterina constantly wept whilst he drew the likeness, the expression of the portrait was far more melancholy than that which was natural to her. As the time of her clothing drew near, Caterina asked as a favour of the mistress of novices, that she might remain in retreat for a whole day, and on the morning previous to the ceremony, which being granted, she remained alone the whole day in the oratory of the novices, thinking of her approaching espousals to Jesus, of the favour which He had manifested towards her by choosing and accepting her as His spouse, and of the corresponding purity of love with which she should devote herself to Him. She also considered how she should please Him, how she should order her future

life, and the like. Whilst she was thus engaged many persons came to the grate, bringing her presents from home, as is usual at the time of clothing, and the sister of the turning-box went to inform her of their arrival. The good girl, distressed at the interruption, went to her mistress, and begged her for that one day to answer for her, and do what was necessary, telling her that she could not think it right to spend that day at the grate, but in retreat, communing with God to whom she was to dedicate herself on the following morning. Her mistress gratified her, and she remained the whole day conversing with her Divine Spouse in holy prayer, nor did she care to see any of the things sent by her parents, either for herself or the nuns. At last, on Sunday morning, January 30th, 1583, in the nineteenth year of her age, she, with great devotion, received the holy communion from the hands of Don Agostino Campi of Pontremoli, confessor of the monastery, who gave her the Carmelite habit; when resigning the name of Caterina, she assumed that of Sister Mary Magdalene. During her clothing, her affections were so much elevated and absorbed in God, that the lay-sisters who took off her secular dress, felt so much awed that they could scarcely presume to disturb her holy recollection by touching her. Several seculars who witnessed the ceremony of her clothing, were so touched by devotion and compunction, as to weep during the whole morning; and one young lady of rank, when she heard her with intense fervour declare

that she forsook the world with all its pomps, was so much affected as to believe she saw a saint, and not feeling in herself that detachment from relatives and all things created which were exhibited by Sister Mary Magdalene, wished that like her she were able to renounce the world, and assume the habit of religion. When the crucifix was placed in her hand, whilst the nuns chanted "Mihi absit gloriari, nisi in Cruce Domini Nostri Jesu Christi," the new spouse of Christ felt interiorly so closely united to Jesus in her soul, and such spiritual sweetness in her heart, that as she afterwards said, she had never before experienced anything which could be compared with it; and then casting all earthly objects into oblivion, she made a perfect oblation of herself to God, protesting to her Divine Spouse that she neither desired nor sought anything but Him crucified, nor wished for aught else but that her soul might be ever united to Him, and ever be instructed by Him in the service of God. Having taken the sacred habit, she with deep humility asked a favour of the father-confessor and the mother-prioress, which was that she might never be compelled to resume the secular dress in the representations so usual amongst the nuns. They gave her their promise, which was ever after strictly observed, and on being asked the motive of her request, she replied, "I have so greatly desired the religious habit, that I can never endure to see myself in any other." On the same evening of her clothing, the new spouse of Christ, kneeling at the feet of her mistress,

Mother Vittoria Contugi, her arms crossed on her breast, told her with great humility and feeling, that she resigned herself as a dead body into her hands, to do whatever she pleased with her, promising to be always submissive and obedient, and earnestly begging that she would continually humble and mortify her self-will. On the following days she displayed such joy, devotion, and exultation of heart, as to appear literally sparkling with the love of God, and those who beheld her declared that the mere sight of her enkindled this love in their own hearts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE VIRTUOUS EXAMPLE WHICH SHE GAVE IN HER NOVICIATE.

Having thus accomplished her desire of being clothed in the religious habit, she began with devotion and fervour to give such rare examples of virtue in the noviceship, as not only greatly to edify the novices, but to excite the admiration of the nuns themselves, by her singular goodness and perfection. The mistress of novices, a nun of great virtue, one day said, "Sister Mary Magdalene deserves rather to be my mistress than my pupil in spiritual things, and knowing, as I do, her virtues and conduct, I should gladly submit to her as a disciple." Though before her clothing she had been most devoted to the holy exercise of prayer, on be-

coming a novice, she deprived herself of the enjoyment that she might avoid singularity, and observe the common rules with the rest. Her mistress, however, knowing her great inclination to prayer, sometimes gave her permission to retire for private devotion whilst the other novices were engaged in various exercises, but she, to shun everything singular, never availed herself of this permission, saying that if she prayed at all the seasons allowed her by the rule, her prayer would not be little ; so much did she prize life in community, and a constant engagement in customary and established exercises.

She esteemed subjection of spirit to community life, and obedience to rule above the most exalted contemplation, assuring her sister novices that she would rather engage in common than in particular devotions, though in themselves good and holy. "For," said she, "in performing what is required by the rule, by custom, or obedience to superiors, we are sure that we perform the will of God, and are, consequently, gaining merit and pleasing Him ; but we are not so well assured of this in the private devotions of our own choice." She, however, found time for private prayer beyond that permitted by the rule, for all her free time, which the novices are allowed to occupy as they please, was spent by her in prayer, and under permission she deprived herself of some of the time allowed for sleep, but she would never absent herself from the general exercises of the community, either for prayer or retirement. She was most prompt

in her observance of the rule, and in executing every order, even when not given especially to herself, never moving a step without the command, or at least the permission of the superior, for she most highly valued obedience, and was therefore most exact in its practice.

She was the first to set her hand to the meanest services of the monastery, such as sweeping, scouring, or similar employments, and this she did through self-contempt, for she regarded herself as the least of the sisters, and thought every one better than herself, and desired to be instructed by all, asking advice even in the least things, lest she should make any mistake, and entreating her companions to warn her when they saw her in error.

She, of course, took her refection with the rest, but secretly gave it to the depository sister, that she might bestow it on the poor for the love of God.

She was most careful never to sadden any one, and when any of the novices appeared sad would say, "Calm your heart, my sister, for God does not shed His graces on sad souls." She had the most tender compassion for the defects of others, treating all with the most heartfelt charity, accommodating herself to every one's will, condescending whenever she could do so without imperfection, and by her sweet manners rendering herself agreeable to all her companions. Her countenance, always cheerful and joyous, was never clouded by any passing occurrence, which was to be attributed to

her constant practice of prayer, by which she had obtained the mastery of her passions, and such union with God, as to live in the constant enjoyment of His sacred presence. So anxious was she for the perfect observance of the rules by herself and others, that she besought the novices frequently to recal the rules to her memory, lest she should transgress them through forgetfulness, promising to do them the same charity. She conversed on the things of God with ease and pleasure, but if other subjects, however harmless, were introduced, she seemed like one insensible, or unintelligent, and only revived and brightened when the discourse became spiritual. She soon led the novices to speak of nothing but God, and so strictly did they observe this practice, that they would actually have thought it an impertinence to introduce conversation on the events of the day. So great was the desire, not only of the novices, but also of the seculars on trial, to converse with Sister Mary Magdalene, that they sought her at every opportunity, always delighting in her society, for in truth, she shone as a sun amongst the rest. Some of the young persons would not sleep till they had saluted her, and asked her to give them some subject for meditation. She in simplicity always gave them some good maxim, which they so highly esteemed, as to write down her words that they might never forget them. By her discourse she made the way of virtue easy, for the sweetness of her words powerfully attracted souls to the

love of God, exciting in them a fervent desire to serve Him perfectly, and to despise the world. Her very looks seemed to constrain others to do good unconsciously. Consequently, the young persons who came to the monastery on trial, strengthened at once by her example and the sweet sanctity of her conversation, generally devoted themselves in that house to the service of God.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHE WISHES TO ANTICIPATE THE TIME OF HER PROFESSION: AN EXTRAORDINARY TRANSPORT OF LOVE WHICH SHE EXPERIENCES.

By the exercise of the virtues named above, the good novice constantly advanced in perfection. Her chief desire was to unite and bind herself more closely to her heavenly Spouse by the tie of holy profession, so that eight months of her novitiate being past, and some other novices being about to make their profession, clearly perceiving the close union with God into which the soul is brought by this holy act, she felt the strongest desire of being professed with them. This desire she made known to the superiors, but was told that she could not be gratified, as her year of probation was not completed. She became very sad at hearing that the oblation of herself to the eternal God must be deferred, and was found weeping bitterly in the noviceship.

On one of the mothers asking what had distressed her, she replied in broken words, "It is a great thing to have the power of bringing myself into intimate union with God by holy profession, and yet not to be allowed to make it." She was, however, pacified on being told that by the decree of the holy Council of Trent, the year of probation could not be abridged, and on being promised by the superiors that she should be satisfied as soon as the year was closed. The seven professed juniors remained as usual in the noviceship, but in her humility Sister Mary Magdalene would no longer presume to converse with them, esteeming herself unworthy to be in the company of those who were so closely united with Jesus their Spouse. Towards the close of the year 1583, it being the season of Advent, the novices, having all made their usual evening prayer in their oratory, had retired, with the exception of Sister Mary Magdalene, who began soon after to weep and break out into lamentations interrupted by tears, and to give other exterior signs of distress. She seemed equally unable to stand or to remain still, gasped for breath, cut and loosened her clothes as though her heart were bursting from her bosom, and instead of being pale as usual, her face was red, and indeed so much flushed, that she no longer looked like the same person. Consumed by the love which burned within her, she even rent her habit, and exclaimed with vehement emotion, "O Love, how art thou offended! Thou art neither known nor loved!" Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, who

had been recently elected mistress of the novices, hastened to her assistance, and leading her to her chamber, obliged her to go into bed. "Must I," said she, "rest on this bed, whilst God is so greatly offended? O Love, in obedience I will go." Nothing remarkable, either in ecstasies or transports, had yet appeared in her, but the mother-prioress, on being called, as well as the mistress of novices, remembered that Signora Maria, the mother of Sister Mary Magdalene, had told them of a similar transport of love which had occurred to her at their villa, as we have before related. It therefore struck them that this was no bodily illness, but something of the same nature. But as they saw that she could not be still, they caused the curtains to be undrawn, and the windows of the room to be opened, that she might breathe more freely. In about two hours she recovered, all who knew of the circumstance being not a little consoled, whilst their opinion of her goodness and sanctity was confirmed.

CHAPTER XX.

HER PROFESSION IS DEFERRED THAT OTHERS MAY BE PROFESSED WITH HER. SHE FORETELLS THAT SHE SHALL MAKE IT ALONE, WHICH SHE DOES.

HAVING arrived at the close of her year of probation, Sister Mary Magdalene repeated her request to be admitted to solemn profession, as she earnestly desired to become in very truth a

religious, by means of the three vows; but the new mistress of novices, Mother Vangelista del Giocondo told her that it would be well to wait till she could be professed with some other novices, who would soon be ready. To this she replied with great humility, "I shall not make my profession with the rest, but against your will, you will be obliged to let me make it alone." To the mother prioress she said the same, but neither of these mothers knew at the time what to infer from her words. The event, however, soon verified the prediction, for in about a month after she became seriously ill, being attacked by high fever accompanied by violent cough and great pain, which allowed her no rest, and even prevented her lying down on the bed. Four of the first physicians of the city were called in, who after many visits declared that they did not understand the nature of her illness, and that after having studied the case carefully, they could not decide on it, and must therefore leave her to God, as no relief could be hoped from human means, by which they meant to imply that they considered the malady to be supernatural. Every remedy, however, which science could suggest was used, but without success, and her danger daily increased. The more, however, that she suffered in body, the greater were her interior consolations. Being asked by the sisters of what she was thinking during her severe pains, she replied with a happy countenance, pointing to a crucifix near her bed, "I consider those great sufferings which the boundless and

incomprehensible love of Jesus has endured for my sake, and by that sight am comforted, since all the sorrows which can be borne by the elect have been already sustained by that Most Holy Humanity, so that to us they become light and grateful." Her soul indeed appeared as tranquil as though she in some measure tasted the sweets of Paradise; but her illness meanwhile increased, and she every day became weaker, so that the physicians at last gave her over. The mother prioress was, consequently, much grieved, at having, contrary to her earnest entreaties, delayed her profession beyond the year of her probation, and being unwilling that she should die unprofessed, called together the father-confessor and the most judicious mothers of the house; they resolved to admit her to profession in extremity, and as she was so much debilitated by her disease, they introduced the confessor to her apartment, that he might profess her on her bed, but she, greatly cheered by the news, and confident in the Divine help, said that if holy obedience permitted she would make her profession in the choir before the altar of our Blessed Lady. Her wish being granted, on the morning of Trinity Sunday, May 29th, 1584, Sister Mary Magdalene, being then eighteen years of age, was carried in the arms of the nuns from the infirmary to the choir, where they had arranged a little couch for her before that altar, knowing that she could not be otherwise supported, and there in the presence of the nuns, she with great fervour and many tears made her solemn profession

and was communicated, thus fulfilling her own prediction that the mothers would be reluctantly obliged to permit her to make her profession alone, and not with the other novices.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHE IS RAPT IN ECSTASY FOR FORTY DAYS SUCCESSIVELY, AFTER HAVING BEEN COMMUNICATED ON HER BED.

The ceremony of her profession being ended, Sister Mary Magdalene was carried back by the nuns to her bed in the infirmary, and on arriving there begged the infirmarians, Sister Maria Laudomine Rustici, and Sister Barbara Bassi, to draw the bed-curtains and leave her, telling them she wanted to rest a little. They did so, but after an hour, being surprised at not hearing her usual cough, they softly entered to see if she were sleeping, and on approaching the bed and undrawing the curtains, they saw her lying on her left side with her hands joined. Her eyes, which were opened, sparkled and were fixed on a crucifix, which hung on the wall on that side of the apartment. She was in rapture and motionless, not even the twinkling of an eye was perceptible, and her face, which from disease had been thin and pale, was now so blooming, fresh, and lovely, that she seemed like an angel come from Paradise. The infirmarians, amazed at this, ran directly to call the mother prioress and the

mistress of the novices, and then the rest of the nuns, who went in succession to see this novel sight, the novice meanwhile being unconscious of their presence. They all praised God for His mercy to their sister, whose rapture ceased in about two hours, when her cough, fever, and sufferings returned, and she became pale, thin, and emaciated as before. This was the first time that the community had seen her in a rapture.

What followed was still more astonishing, for during forty days successively she was every day rapt in ecstasy, after having received the most holy Sacrament in bed. In this state she remained for nearly two hours, with the same lovely countenance, and then returned to her usual state. In these ecstasies, however, she neither felt, moved, nor spoke, so that the marvellous intelligence communicated to her by God could not be known. Consequently, the mistress of novices asked the father confessor how she was to act, and the latter, doubtless inspired by God, that such rare revelations might not he lost, ordered her in His name and in virtue of holy obedience, to command this sister that every circumstance of her life, but especially what occurred in her raptures, should be communicated to two mothers, one the same mistress, Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, and the other Sister Maria Madalena Mori, both steady, judicious, and most virtuous nuns, and he enjoined them to commit all her declarations to writing, that they might know and examine

whether she were walking safely, and that the revelations might not be lost. The mistress executed the command, on which the young religious immediately burst into tears, grieving that anything connected with herself should be taken into such account. However, though feeling great repugnance and confusion, especially when she had to relate or disclose anything which denoted her virtue, or the privileges granted her by God, she being very obedient, related faithfully, though with tears, whatever occurred in her raptures, the nuns taking an exact account of all. As the mistress of the novices from the duties of her office, could not always be present at the writing, she substituted Sister Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia, who was under her care, and the companion of Sister Mary Magdalene in the noviciate, and had also been her acquaintance and friend in the world. This sister was ever after the faithful and diligent secretary of all the raptures, ecstasies, transports, and actions of this holy mother, and signed with her own hand the greater part of what is now written respecting her. Twenty years since four entire manuscript volumes were given me for revision in Florence by Signor Francesco Benveduti, canon and penitentiary of the Duomo and director and confessor of the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli. These volumes were full of the raptures, intelligences, visions, and ecstasies of the saint, who was then living; written for the most part by the hand of that mother, Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME INTELLIGENCES WHICH WERE IMPARTED TO HER IN THESE MORNING ECSTASIES.

I DO not intend to write the raptures and ecstasies enjoyed by this holy novice, either during her novitiate, or in the remainder of her life, since a collection of them selected with great care and discrimination, has already been published by Signor Vincenzo Puccini, the present director and confessor of the monastery, in one large volume appended to his Life of the Saint; but as that book may not be in every one's hands, I shall in the subsequent narrative, relate some facts without which the account would be defective. I shall here only record what occurred once or twice during these forty days of raptures, that from these specimens the reader may judge of the whole.

One morning in particular, having regained her consciousness after communion, she under obedience declared to the appointed mothers, that through that heavenly food she had seen her soul in a wonderful manner unite itself to, and transform itself into God. We give her own words: "I knew not whether I were living or dead, in or out of my body, on earth or in heaven; I saw nothing but God. All-glorious in Himself, loving Himself purely, knowing Himself thoroughly, infinite in capa-

city, loving all creatures with a pure and infinite love (I perceived Him) to be an Union in Trinity, an Individual Trinity, a God of supreme, incomprehensible, inscrutable goodness, and thus, being in God, I was no longer conscious of anything personal, but only saw myself in Him. I saw not myself, but Him, as far as a creature well-disposed and inflamed with divine love is capable of discerning the mysteries of the Divinity. As far as I could guess, I continued in this contemplation for about the space of an hour, and then returned to consciousness; but I can never express my enjoyment during that abstraction, since through my weakness I could not understand what was then shown me, and what I was made to feel and enjoy. But I understood that at the day of judgment God would raise our bodies to a sublimity and greatness which I cannot describe, and which I could not myself comprehend, in connexion with which I heard this word of St. Paul addressed to my spirit, 'Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascenderunt, quæ præparavit Deus iis, qui diligunt illum.' After having continued in this consideration some time, and contemplated the great love borne by God to all creatures, I commended them all to Jesus, and my consciousness returned."

On another occasion, having been as usual rapt in God after communion, she gave the following account in these terms: "I saw at this time that unitive love joined and united me to Jesus, causing me to know according to

my capacity the greatness and purity of His love, though He then gave me to see something so great that I could not at all grasp it; Jesus telling me that He would impart to me a knowledge of Himself, which would enable me always to love, and never to be satisfied in loving Him. I also understood that He would so impress this knowledge on my heart, that in the remembrance I should ever love Him, and that He gave me this abstraction of mind that my soul might the better unite itself to God. He revealed to my spirit many future things, and thus addressed me in relation to myself: 'Love, that love may be more deeply engraved on thine heart,' and then added that He would have me ever to mourn like a turtle, lamenting with Him that He is so little known and loved by creatures. I also perceived that all those souls who partake in the blood of Jesus, that is, such as suffer in this world for the love of Him, are fair and beautiful in the sight of God, and that could any soul know the dignity in which she stands when loving God, she would dissolve in sweetness; whereas, on the contrary, could she behold her deformity when deprived of the love of God, she would turn into dust or something still more vile. Then, as I am wont, I commended all creatures to Jesus, and the rapture ended." These and similar intelligences were granted to her every morning after communion, during the forty days which succeeded her profession.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF OTHER TRANSPORTS OF LOVE EXPERIENCED BY HER DURING THESE FORTY DAYS AFTER VESPERS.

Besides these morning raptures after communion, Sister Mary Magdalene experienced others during these forty days, being frequently in great transports of love after vespers. Her disease had so much increased that she was hourly thought to be dying, being so weak and helpless as to be unable to stand, to leave her bed without assistance, or even to stay up whilst it was made; nevertheless at the close of vespers, impelled by divine love, she rose with great energy and impetuosity, and hastily running to a little altar in the apartment, took from thence a crucifix, and detaching the image from the cross, closely embraced and kissed it, running about the room with it in her hands, and loudly exclaiming, "O Love, Love unloved and unknown, I shall never weary in calling Thee Love!" Then seizing the hand of one of her companions, she said, "Come, run with me to call on Love; be my companion, for I shall never weary in naming Him! Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum."

Sometimes she stopped, sweetly smiling as she gazed on the crucifix; sometimes in the gladness of her heart she said, "O my Jesus, give me as many voices as shall be heard by all throughout the world, that Thy love may be alike loved and

prized by all. But that worst of poisons, self-love, deprives us of the high knowledge of Thee, being contrary to the love of Thee. O Love, I desire Thee and no other! Who could ever imagine or speak Thy greatness? Thou art infinite, eternal, immutable." All this time her eyes were fixed on the image of Christ which she held in her hand, and turning to her sisters she showed them the wounds, saying, "See the love with which our Jesus has loved us! Could creatures know this love, and their offences against it, they would condemn themselves, not to one, but to a thousand hells, and to a thousand more devils than are there. O Love, great art Thou, and worthy of all praise! But who shall suffice for Thy praises? Were the tongues of men and angels united to the stars of heaven, the smallest grains of sand, the drops of water, the birds of the air, all to praise Thee, they would be altogether inadequate!" Being here asked by the nuns whether she did not feel fatigue or exhaustion from speaking with such vehemence, she cheerfully replied, "How, my sisters, can I suffer, being with my Love, Whom I so much desire? Know you not that love feels no pain?" Then turning to the crucifix, which she still held, she commended to Jesus all creatures, especially Jews, heretics, and infidels, with such ardent charity, that it seemed as though she would melt like wax before the fire. She began thus: "O Love, I pray Thee to give Thyself to Thy creatures, and so to work in them that they may love none but Thee! O my Jesus, cause those who

so eagerly expect Thee (the Jews) to remain no longer in such error, since Thou art indeed come. Cause them, I beseech Thee, to know Thee, O my Jesus, for vain is their hope and expectation. And those too who have wandered far from Thee, I mean the heretics, cause them to return to Thee like wandering sheep, and may they love and reverence Thee as their Shepherd. Cause those who believe not in Thee, but who are still Thy creatures, O Love, to return to Thee! O Love, could a soul but see what it is without Thee, it would die not one but a thousand deaths." The father confessor one day determined to be present, and for a trial made them take the crucifix from her, but she still continued her colloquies with it, and that with such tender fervour, as to move all the nuns to tenderness and tears, exciting them to the love of God, whilst in her countenance there appeared such great joy and brightness, as to render her surpassingly lovely and attractive. She usually continued in these transports for three or four hours.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF ONE TRANSPORT IN WHICH SHE WITNESSED THE ENTIRE PASSION OF OUR LORD.

She once continued in one of these transports for the space of sixteen hours successively. It began on Thursday* at half-past one of the night, and

* According to the Italian reckoning.

ended on Friday at eighteen, and it seemed that Jesus would make her a partaker of the sufferings of His most sacred Passion; for springing from her bed with her usual ardour of love, she began to contemplate the treachery of Judas, and proceeded step by step to the death of Christ on the cross. She saw with extreme distress the Lord sweating blood in the garden, and uttered such devout and compassionate words as moved the hearers to tears. She beheld Him betrayed by the kiss of Judas, taken and bound by the Jews, and with much affection detested their impiety, and exalted the love of her adored Spouse. She beheld Christ led in bonds to the high-priest, and weeping and afflicted exclaimed, "Alas! do they offer these insults to my Love? O Mary, O Magdalen, could you now behold Him, surely you would be like two fierce lionesses robbed of their young, who in their fury run hither and thither tearing all they find." Here she recited many apposite passages of Scripture. On beholding Jesus bound to the pillar and struck, she wept and shuddered in excessive grief, as though feeling in her very soul the sufferings of her Beloved, with whom she held colloquies of much tenderness and compassion, uttering many beautiful and devout thoughts on the mysteries of the Passion.

When she afterwards saw Him crowned with thorns and exhibited to the people with the words "Ecce Homo," then bearing the cross on His shoulders, and nailed to it on Mount Calvary,

her eyes became two fountains of tears, and though in this as in other transports, the infirmarians, seeing her great sufferings, sent her under obedience to bed, her transport of love and sorrow would not allow her to rest there. They vainly attempted to hold her; she tore and threw off everything that came to her hands, and she suffered so much as even to moisten the sacking of the bed by her perspiration. On coming to her senses, she declared that Jesus, to satisfy her constant desire of showing His sufferings, had shown Himself to her as He actually suffered. These transports differed much from those ecstasies which she experienced in the morning, for in the latter she was composed, quiet, and so motionless that even her eyes were fixed; she neither saw nor heard anything, her soul being intent on the interior operation, without any operation of the external senses; but when she spoke and replied in rapture, it proved that her soul was not wholly concentrated, for she spoke according to the objects represented and moving in her imagination, for the imagination is that which moves the tongue to speak. But when the strength of Divine love inflamed her heart, from which excited spirits were diffused and sent to her head and through all her body, then she had strength to rise from her bed, to run through the room, and to perform other acts of great vigour. She moved, spoke, heard, and answered, but in all this was never distracted from the contemplation of her Beloved.

This excitement of love having ceased, she resumed her former state. She attained to these transports in her eighteenth year, as has been already noticed.

CHAPTER XXV.

SHE IS CURED OF HER ILLNESS BY THE PRAYERS OF THE NUNS.

Although when in ecstasies or transports of love, Sister Mary Magdalene had always an angelic and animated countenance, her eyes being beautiful and sparkling as though she had no ailment, yet as soon as she resumed her senses and the energy of love had ceased, she again suffered the fever, pains, and cough which had before afflicted her; consequently, when her forty days of ecstasy were past, through her disease and reaction, she became so weak and exhausted, that the mothers feared that they were about to lose her, as they knew not what remedy to propose for her restoration. The medical men wished to try a medicated water, but she herself declared her debility to be too great to allow her to take it, and the prioress and the other nuns who saw her extreme prostration of strength, were of the same opinion. Medicinal means therefore failing them, they resolved to have recourse to Divine aid, and all the nuns were commanded to turn to God and ask her restoration with fervent prayers. The desire for

her restoration and the dread of losing her being general, with unanimous earnestness they asked of God the blessing of her recovery, which was granted for the spiritual good of that house. Amongst the rest, a lay-sister who knew the devotion of Sister Mary Magdalene to the venerable Mother Maria Bagnese, made a vow to her for the saint's recovery. The body of Mother Maria is kept with much veneration in a stone tomb in the chapter-room of the monastery, she having been a religious of great sanctity, as may be seen in her Life written by Fra. Alessandro Capocchi, and Fra. Serafino Razzi, Dominicans, and the abate Silvano Razzi, a Camaldolese.

Behold a wonder! The vow was made in the evening, and all the nuns offered their prayer. That evening she became much worse, but on the following morning was miraculously well and cured of all her maladies, to the amazement and joy of all the nuns who had seen her in such a sad state on the preceding day. All rendered due thanks to God. The mother prioress gave her an obedience to stay a few days in the infirmary for the confirmation of her health, and she in the meantime waited on the sick and went in the evening to the noviceship, to pray with the other novices as though she had not been ill. After her recovery, she many times, but especially on the 11th of July that same year, saw Mother Maria Bagnese in the glories of Paradise, majestically seated on a resplendent throne of light, adorned with jewels. It was revealed to her that the throne was her virginity,

consecrated to God and ever preserved, and that the jewels were all those souls, whom by example and exhortation she had led to the service of God; these formed for her an encircling crown increasing her ornaments and her beauty.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHE BEGS TO REMAIN IN THE NOVICESHIP, AND ABOUNDS MORE THAN EVER IN ACTS OF VIRTUE.

After her miraculous cure, the father-director and the mother-prioress having witnessed her frequent raptures, resolved on removing her from the noviceship, and placing her in a separate cell, that she might without disturbance and with more convenience attend to her divine contemplation; but on this coming to her ears, she, who had always avoided all singularity, was so greatly distressed at this resolution as to weep not a little. She went directly to the superiors, and earnestly entreated them not to remove her from the other novices, and from obedience to their mistress, saying that she needed to be in subjection more than all the rest, since she knew herself to be the worst of all, and greatly needed instruction in the rules and order of the monastery. To the novices themselves it seemed hard to be deprived of her useful and holy company. She was consoled by the superiors, and remained in the noviceship till September, 1586, in the whole, three years and eight

months, during which time she was more than ever exemplary in the exercise of all holy virtues. She was most punctual in executing and observing all the regulations of the noviceship, however minute, and preferred conversing with the most simple novices, and those of the humblest condition, always taking the lowest place. She deprived herself of sleep, that she might have time for prayer, and not being allowed to rise in the night, either before lying down or at some other time, she would kneel a little on her bed, and being directly rapt in ecstasy, would stay in that position for hours. And it many times happened that the novices, when rising in a morning, seeing she did not rise with the rest, nor make the least movement, went with their mistress to her bedside, and lifting the curtains found her in ecstacy, and it was truly marvellous to see that though she remained for hours at a time in her transports and ecstatic contemplations, nevertheless, when she regained her senses, she spoke to all with such benignity and humility, that she seemed to be no longer the same person who had so closely conversed with God but a few minutes before; on the contrary, on coming out of her rapture, if some menial office were to be performed, she was the first to set her hand to it with readiness and cheerfulness. She was always studying the best way to excite others to the love of God, and exhorted her companions to continue in His service with humility and purity of mind. She knew of methods by which she could wonderfully mortify herself with-

out others being aware of it, and that she might have continual matter for mortification, she with holy art concealed her inclinations, appetites, wishes, and desires, and those things which naturally would have given gratification and pleasure, she appeared to dislike and disrelish; whilst, on the contrary, for the things which she abhorred, she evinced a particular preference; so that the superior and the other nuns wishing to gratify her might lay these practices upon her under the idea of giving her pleasure. Thus it repeatedly happened that she was often employed by the superior in many things to which she had a natural repugnance, and was not employed in those to which she had an inclination, and which she would have done willingly. By this artifice, she was in a state of continual mortification, to her great spiritual joy and delight. She used to say that we should endeavour to have always within ourselves some capital unknown to creatures, that is, some mortification or some secret suffering, only known to God, for whom we should mortify ourselves all the day long. Walking by these steps, she had arrived at such perfection that nothing could either destroy or disturb her union with God. The other nuns, who daily witnessed the examples of every virtue which were given by her, by which they felt themselves effectively moved to good works, generally entertained so high an opinion of her sanctity, as to admire and revere her as a saint, whilst some in their devotion would kiss the very ground on which her feet had trodden.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT OCCURRED TO A LAY-SISTER IN THE NOVICESHIP IN CONNEXION WITH SISTER MARY MAGDALENE.

WHILST Sister Mary Magdalene was in the noviceship, a lay-sister was clothed, who being just come from the country, was very simple and ignorant. The father-confessor afterwards told her to converse with that little saint of a novice, and on her asking him her name, he said, "She is called Sister Mary Magdalene," but as the lay-sister was very stupid, she never remembered the names of the nuns and novices; however, as she wished to know her, she went about asking the novices who was that holy nun who was amongst them, and they, amused by her simplicity, did not satisfy her by informing her. Now though this good girl when alone with Sister Mary Magdalene, saw in her countenance and conversation a sanctity which she did not perceive in the others, she was still not assured that she was the person in question. It happened one day that this lay-sister heard mass in the choir with Sister Mary Magdalene, and saw a great light around her, which diffusing itself filled the whole choir. In the midst of this glory she saw a boy more lovely than anything ever seen in her life, who was tenderly caressing Sister Mary Magdalene. The sister, astonished and alarmed at the sight, in

her great agitation forgot where she was, and flew out of the choir, like one distracted. She was met by two nuns, who asked her what was the matter, and why she was in such terror. She related to them her vision, and thought this child was Jesus, who in condescension to her ignorance had taught her by this apparition who was that little saint whom the novices would not point out to her. Another time as Sister Mary Magdalene was helping to make the bread, the same lay-sister again saw this child at her side, and therefore conjectured that in all her actions Jesus ever stood near her. Another time when in choir, at the Salve sung after Complin, she saw an image of the Blessed Virgin, which was in the choir, raise its arm and give benediction to Sister Mary Magdalene. She therefore believed that Jesus and the Virgin had shown her these things, that she might know and reverence Sister Mary Magdalene, and accordingly she always regarded her with deep reverence, whilst the saint on her part, knowing the great simplicity and goodness of this lay-sister, placed great confidence in her, and employed her to take her collation to the depository sister, that it might be given away in alms, whilst she gathered wormwood in the garden and ate it that she might taste its bitterness. She often privately took from the lay-sister the soiled aprons and clothes which she wore in the kitchen, washed, dried, and then returned them to her. This she also did when the lay-sister had the clothes of the other no-

vices to wash, washing them herself, and telling the sister to say nothing of the matter. The sister, though greatly mortified, did not venture to tell, since she had requested her not to do so. Further, this sister being cook, Sister Mary Magdalene begged her to make her soup with water, with which request she in her holy simplicity complied. The mistress of novices having sent an order that she should make a little rich gravy soup for Sister Mary Magdalene, who was weak, she put slices of bread in the pan, poured warm water on them without salt, and sent it to her at table, and though she had a little scruple in doing this, yet having promised her secrecy, and having a great notion that she knew hidden things, she feared that were she to tell the saint would know. During the life of the saint, she consequently never dared to disclose anything she told her, and only did so when examined on oath in the process.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF THE INNUMERABLE RAPTURES AND ECSTASIES OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE, AND OF THEIR DIFFERENT MODES.

Although the greater part of the raptures and ecstasies of this holy mother which have been committed to writing occurred during the time of her being in the noviceship, that is, in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth years of

her age, or a little later, from 1584 to 1587, it is nevertheless certain that they continued during her whole life, as may be gathered from the raptures already printed. So frequently did they occur, that their exact number cannot be known, and it seems to me that we may safely say, that for the greater part of her life, whilst in religion, she was in raptures, for they did not only occur when she was regularly praying, communicating, or assisting at the divine offices, or any other spiritual exercise, but many times when occupied in manual labour, either in kneading the bread, sweeping the house, washing the linen, or performing other exterior works, and once in particular she was rapt whilst washing, and remained with her arms in the water; and as in such raptures she was always immoveable, the water froze, and they were obliged to use boiling water to melt it before she could withdraw her arm without injury. Sometimes when eating, she would remain in ecstasy with her hand in the air, whilst about to take the morsel or raise the glass to her mouth; from which we may conclude that no exterior occupation could prevent the interior union of her heart with God, nor distract her mind from the contemplation of the Divine mysteries. Sometimes if but a word were spoken in relation to God, or His holy name were mentioned, if she heard the name of Jesus, or this one word "love," if she saw a flower, a plant, or any other work of nature, however small, she was thrown into a rapture. The novices, knowing this, sometimes intention-

ally showed her flowers and spoke of their beauty, and also other works of God, that they might see her in ecstasy, and very often gained their point. As her raptures were sometimes long, lasting not hours but days, (as that for instance of 1585, which lasted eight successive days and nights during the entire octave of Pentecost,) and she spoke with rapidity, one person was not enough to note them down. The superiors, therefore, set two or three to write, changing them when there was a necessity, and every writer had two assistants, to remind her of what had been said. One noted down the first sentence, marking it with the number one, whilst the other attentively listened to what was said, and then wrote the second sentence, marking it with the number two. The third in like manner wrote the third sentence, marking it with the number three, and then they began again, the first taking the fourth sentence, the second the fifth, the third the sixth, and so on from hand to hand. The rapture being ended, they joined the papers together, and spreading them out according to the numbers marked, read them over to the saint, who listened in obedience, and if the paper were well written confirmed it, and on the contrary corrected and explained it if they had not heard correctly. In this way all her ecstatic discourses were taken down; but as they were very frequent, and the writers could not always be present, and there was neither convenience nor opportunity for writing them, many things have been lost; and after a time the writing was

given up and scarcely anything was noted, though, as has been said, during her whole life the mothers might have taken down various things could they have done so conveniently.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OF THE VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES AND MODES OF THESE RAPTURES.

These ecstasies, raptures, and transports of love were not always uniform, but occurred to her in various ways: and first, in rapture her complexion entirely changed, and from being generally thin and pale, through her constant penances, she became, as I have said, red and white, her face appeared full and healthy, and her eyes, which sparkled like stars in the evening sky, were usually elevated and fixed, though no one could tell on what object. There appeared in her face such grace and beauty, combined with such majesty and dignity, that the nuns were never weary in admiring her, and in all who saw her she excited such pure affections and produced such great devotion, that such as were stained by sins and faults were unable to remain in her presence without blushing, for her very countenance breathed purity, sanctity, and especial grace. As her contemplation of God and His Divine attributes rose higher, so did her gladness and exultation. She would appear beyond measure animated, yet always

maintain a modest and benignant gravity. The occasional glow of her face proved that the flame of Divine love was kindled in her heart. As her revelations from God became more sublime, she remained immoveable and fixed, without the slightest action, not even the twinkling of an eye, and so firmly was her body attached to the place in which she was, that when the nuns tried to raise an arm, or move a hand, all was rigid as a statue of stone, so that she seemed rather by her weight to draw down whoever tried to move her. Once, in my own presence, two nuns, one on each side, tried to move her when she was in rapture, that I might see and judge for myself, but they could not bend her in the least. When great force was used to move a finger or any other member, though perfectly unconscious at the time, yet she afterwards felt pain in that limb. In sad and mournful contemplations, when God revealed to her the offences committed against His Divine Majesty, the Passion of Jesus, the pains of Purgatory, condemned souls, the hideousness of the demons, or other affecting circumstances, she became sad, trembled, and uttered words of grief and lamentation, using gestures which excited compassion in the spectators.

Often in her raptures she spoke deliberately, and declared what God had given her to understand, and the gifts and graces which He imparted to her soul. She explained high conceptions of spiritual and divine things, gave the sense of Holy Scripture in learned and solid words,

full of the light of God, and with great grace, and connected her reasonings, uniting the beginning with the end. She very frequently spoke Latin, not merely repeating Scripture passages, but forming sentences in Latin, to the astonishment of the nuns, as they were sure that she had never learned the language; but on the contrary, could read but little on entering the community, so that they had been obliged to teach her, and even at that time she could not read correctly, nor could she have accurately given one Latin sentence, excepting in rapture. Her language when not in rapture was very simple, and she hardly read any other book than her Breviary and the Gospels. In these raptures she sometimes spoke in the form of colloquies or dialogues with the Eternal Father, with the Incarnate Word, or with the Holy Ghost, with the Blessed Virgin and other saints, and made propositions in their persons and in her own according to the nature of the subject. They could easily know in whose person she spoke, not only from her own declaration to the mothers after the rapture, but from her change of voice. When speaking in the Person of the Eternal Father, her voice was full of majesty and grace, and emphatic to a degree which none but those who heard it could imagine. When she spoke in the Persons of the Son or of the Holy Ghost, her voice was still majestic, but softer, and so it varied according to the variety of the subjects or of the persons who spoke in her; but when speaking in her own person, it became so low

as to be barely audible, whilst her manner was so humble that she seemed desirous of annihilating herself. She appeared in these raptures to be far from this world, and when it pleased God that she should address any one, she cried with a loud voice as though at a great distance from the individual, often saying to herself, "She is too far off, she cannot hear me," and though she was answered in a low tone, she very frequently did not hear, as once occurred to myself. I had caused her to be called under obedience when in rapture. She obeyed and came, spoke and questioned me, but when I replied, she did not hear me, but said to herself, "There is too great a distance between us, they do not hear me down there;" whence I concluded that she felt herself to be raised to heaven, whilst I was far below her on earth. At other times she heard more or less, as she was more or less abstracted. She, however, always distinguished the voice of the superior from that of the other nuns, and obeyed her call. Sometimes she not only moved when in rapture, but went to various places, as when it was given her to share in the Passion of her Lord, she, in her abstraction so vividly represented Christ suffering, that she seemed as though she had indeed been Himself. At other times she went with incredible swiftness from one place to another, mounting and descending steps with such agility, that she seemed rather to fly than touch the earth with her feet. She sprang securely on the most dangerous places, as when on the feast of the In-

vention of the Cross, May 3rd, 1592, she ran into the choir, and without human help or steps, leapt on the cornice which surrounds the church, and the height of which from the area of the church is about fifteen *braccia*, whilst in breadth it is not more than the third of a *braccia*. From this she with perfect safety took down the crucifix, and having unfastened it from the cross, she placed it in her lap, clasped it to her breast, then gave it to the nuns to kiss, and taking off her veil, wiped it as though it had been covered with sweat; actions which in such a situation would have made any other person giddy. Sometimes when God gave her a high perception of the Divine Essence, unable to contain her unspeakable joy, she used gestures and movements which were truly wonderful. She leapt, bounded, and danced with such astonishing gracefulness and agility that she seemed to be a celestial spirit. She would then make several turns round the room, now prostrating herself in adoration of the Most Holy Trinity, now rising and looking so fixedly into heaven, that it seemed as though she would rise from the earth, attracted by the sweetness of heavenly and divine objects. Now sweetly smiling, she would utter a few grave words; now gracefully turning her ear, she seemed to listen to heavenly harmonies, and songs of Paradise; and so many other wonders occurred in her raptures, that it would be impossible to recount them all, or to make them intelligible to those who never witnessed them.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW SHE WAS ASSURED THAT HER RAPTURES WERE OF GOD, AND NOT AN EFFECT OF DIABOLICAL ILLUSION AND OF NATURAL CAUSES.

THERE is nothing in the spiritual life more to be dreaded, nor perhaps more dangerous, than raptures, visions, and revelations; not merely because the devil transforms himself into an angel of light to deceive us, but because they are very frequently things arising from causes purely natural, either strong imaginations or apprehensions caused either by redundant humours or intense affections, for which reason they are especially dangerous in women, who are guided by their affections, and give more ready credence to strong imaginations than men, who are better instructed and act more reasonably; but as I have written on this subject in the second part of my treatise of the presence of God, chapters eleven and twenty, where those who wish may see my thoughts on the subject, I shall only observe here that this blessed young nun was always, through humility, exceedingly fearful of being deceived and deluded, and often wept much at the idea, praying to God and questioning her spiritual fathers on the point. She frequently asked me with many tears, if I did not think her deluded, and made many inquiries for her satisfaction in the matter.

Any one witnessing her life of purity and innocence, would have felt sure that she was not deceived. Not the slightest fault could be detected in her, and the more she increased in the gifts and graces of God, the more humble and self-despising did she become. Nevertheless, God in many ways removed every doubt which could arise either in her own mind or in that of others. First, in a rapture which she had in the year 1585, for eight successive days in the time of Pentecost, our Lord, as will be shown, gave her to understand that He would prove her for five years by various temptations, promising that when her time of probation should be ended, He would send her a Jesuit father, and another whose profession she did not know, and that both should confirm and quiet her on the subject of the raptures and temptations, and bring consolation to her spirit. The predicted five years being ended, and the father-confessor of the monastery, Don Agostino Campi, having died in the year 1591, the Reverend Francesco Benvenuti, canon and penitentiary of the cathedral of Florence, was appointed director and confessor in ordinary to that monastery. To him Sister Mary Magdalene communicated every circumstance of her life, besides which he read all that had been written of her intelligences; but though he approved of all, he said that in so important a matter he should not wish to be the sole judge, and therefore, in 1592, he introduced Father Nicolo Fabrini, rector of the Jesuits' college, as confessor extraordinary to that house, recall-

ing him in 1593. Then Sister Mary Magdalene, in a rapture of February 27th, understood that the said father-rector was that father of the Company of Jesus who had been promised for her consolation, and that as she had narrated all the circumstances of her life to the new director and confessor, she must also give an account of it to this father, for that these were the two who were to confirm and console her. She told the prioress and confessor what she had in this revelation been commanded to do, and with their permission opened her interior to the same father-rector, and the director also gave him the four MS. vols. of her raptures and intelligences. Having well examined everything, he approved of the whole, saying that he did not find any delusion, and that these ecstasies, raptures, and intelligences were of God, and should be so esteemed, and in conversation with the mother-prioress and the director he added many praises of this blessed soul. In this manner the promise made her so many years before was verified and fulfilled.

In the year 1586 God gave her another proof in two raptures, one on the 16th and the other on the 25th of August; and in order to quiet her, and to assure the others that her raptures were from Him, He was pleased to give her this sign, that for fifteen days she should only take food thrice. She ate on that Sunday, which was the 25th of August, and during fifteen days she was only to take food three times, that is, on the two Thursdays and the intervening Sunday,

on which latter day she was to take Lenten food, and on the two Thursdays nothing but a little bread and wine late in the evening. On her telling the father-confessor and the mother-prioress what God had commanded, they resolved on permitting her to make the trial. She therefore began on the same Sunday, taking no food through the whole of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, till Thursday evening a little before the Angelus, when she took a little bread, and afterwards a little wine. On the Saturday she took nothing, and on Sunday ate only Lenten food. On the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday she neither ate nor drank anything, till Thursday evening at the time of the Angelus, when, as before, she took a little bread and wine, but nothing else till the Sunday, which completed the appointed time. She never, during the fifteen days, tasted the least drop of water, excepting at the times mentioned. All this time she, as usual, went through all the laborious exercises of the house, without appearing either languid or weary. On the contrary, she seemed rather better than she was wont to be, which to the nuns appeared miraculous. When the others went to table, she either served or remained in the noviceship, taking the opportunity of humbling herself by saying, when she saw the rest go to their meals, "Through my sins I am unworthy to do as they." And in many other ways she was clearly proved to be led by the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SHE PREDICTS FUTURE EVENTS IN THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.

God also gave to this blessed young nun light to foresee future events, and (to name a few instances proved in the processes, for to mention all would be impossible) I will here relate, that in 1586, the twentieth year of her age, when a new prioress was to be elected, Sister Mary Magdalene understood in a rapture, on the 29th of September, that it was the will of God that she should speak of some important matters to Cardinal Alessandro Medici, Archbishop of Florence, who was to be present at the election. She told this to the mother-prioress and the father-confessor; but as she said that the subject of her address related to the government of his church and the care of its monasteries, fearing that the cardinal might be offended, they determined on making Sister Mary Magdalene communicate early, and then on shutting her up in an apartment, that she might not be able to speak to him. She went early to communion, as she was commanded, but no sooner was she communicated than she fell into a rapture exactly in the place and before the grate where the cardinal used to stand during the elections. The nuns with all their strength tried to remove her and carry her away, but it was impossible for them to do so, the

Holy Ghost having immoveably fixed her in that place. The cardinal arrived that same day, after Sister Mary Magdalene had been seven hours in rapture, and no sooner was he arrived than she began to speak to him with great vehemence, beginning her discourse with these words: "Alessandro! Alessandro!" and said what God gave her to say. Her discourse being ended, the rapture ceased, and Monsignore remained in great admiration, saying, "This daughter has truly spoken in the person of the Holy Ghost." The election being made, the cardinal recalled Sister Mary Magdalene, and discoursed with her a long time, being greatly satisfied with her. He then caused the prioress to be called, Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, who had been just elected, and told her that Sister Mary Magdalene had predicted that he would be Pope, and that he had found in her great spirituality and perfection. Besides this, when the same cardinal went to France as legate of Pope Clement VIII., and passed in his way through Florence before the monastery where this blessed one was then in rapture, she said, "That Christ" (her usual name for the prelates and priests of the Church) "has great honour now, and will attain to the supreme dignity, but it will not last long;" and she frequently predicted the same in the presence of the prioress and other nuns. All was verified, for he was elevated to the pontificate in the year 1605, after the death of Clement, taking the name of Leo XI., but survived his elevation only six-and-twenty days. The blessed mother, when

informed of his election, said, "I am glad to see that I was not deceived."

In the year 1590, she, in the presence of many nuns, predicted in rapture the arrival of a young foreign girl to be a nun in that monastery. The nuns were vexed at hearing this, as they never received foreigners willingly. But Sister Mary Magdalene said that they need not doubt in this case, as this young person would be greatly enlightened, a despiser of herself, and a lover of poverty. Five years after, there came to Florence, and subsequently to that monastery, Caterina, daughter of Signor Rodrigo Ximenes, a Portuguese, when Sister Mary Magdalene declared her to be the young foreigner of whom she had spoken five years before. In the course of a month she was clothed, and on the day of her clothing, Sister Mary Magdalene predicted many interior trials and temptations which would befal Sister Angelica Caterina, which was the name she had assumed; and as her predictions respecting her before had been verified, so were these also, as she herself attested.

In the year 1591, Signor Francesco Benvenuti, canon and penitentiary of the cathedral, being appointed by the archbishop, Cardinal de' Medici, to the direction of the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, accepted the appointment with the intention of causing the nuns to be confessed and communicated by others. This intention being known, Sister Mary Magdalene declared in rapture, that he would live in that

office half the time of his predecessor, that he would always confess and communicate the nuns, as long as he lived, and would give them the Jesuit Fathers as their extraordinary preachers and confessors. All came to pass as she foretold. He changed his mind, and being inspired to do so, confessed and communicated the nuns himself, during his whole life; he gave them the fathers of the society as their confessors and preachers extraordinary, and with singular zeal exerted himself in helping all to acquire religious perfection, and the holy mother saw that this zeal was obtained for him through the intercession of his predecessor. He remained fourteen years in his office, exactly half the time of the former director, and died in 1605, highly esteemed for his devotion, being by his own desire buried in the church of the monastery.

In the month of November, 1591, a young lady, named Leonora Carlini, entered the monastery to see how she liked it. She desired to be a nun in a house of strict observance, but her father was unwilling. She felt an especial inclination for three houses, the Franciscan monastery, the Crocetta of St. Dominic, and this of the Carmelites, but had not confided these her thoughts to any person. On the evening of her entrance, Sister Mary Magdalene was rapt in ecstasy in her presence, and as usual became so lovely that the young lady thought she beheld an angel, saying that her eyes were so beautiful that they won her

heart; and she felt great interior satisfaction. In this rapture the holy mother saw Leonora's angel-guardian with a ladder in his hand, the top of which reached to heaven; she saw that he held it suspended, and that St. Francis, St. Dominic, and St. Angelus the Carmelite, the protectors of the three houses, each said, "Let her be mine!" The holy mother then exclaimed in rapture, "Angelus will win!" and having said this, she saw the angel-guardian of Leonora stop and place the feet of the ladder in the Carmelite monastery. On recovering from her rapture she said to the young lady, "Your angel-guardian has placed the ladder which is to lead you to heaven in this monastery; and it is the will of God that you should become a nun of this house, and though you will have many difficulties, you will overcome them." Immediately the young lady felt a strong desire to take the habit there, and the more so, as she saw her secret thoughts respecting the three houses discovered without her having disclosed them. Leonora went home, where on declaring her intention, she had great contention with her father and brother, who did not wish her to become a religious, and were firmly resolved that she should not enter that house. The nuns who heard of her conflicts, regarded her as lost to them, but the holy mother persisted in saying, "She will take the habit here." One evening in January, Sister Mary Magdalene being in the refectory at night was rapt as usual, and saw this young girl in the form of a dove just escaping from the hands of Jesus.

Three times she exclaimed after a pause, "Hold her—O Jesus, hold her—she escapes!" The nuns did not understand her, but on recovering her senses she declared to the appointed mothers what she had seen, and they, the better to ascertain the truth, sent on the following morning for the young lady, who after breakfast came to the grate, and on being asked by Sister Maria Pacifica what had occurred to her on the preceding evening, said that on that evening between one and two o'clock of the night* she was in her room, wearied and perplexed by the great opposition made to her desire of becoming a nun; and to get out of her trouble, resolved to go at once and tell her father, that he might do as he pleased with her, but that on moving to go out of her room for that purpose, she found that when arrived at the doorway she could go no further, but felt herself pulled back without seeing by whom; that she tried the second and the third time, but was always pulled back, at which she was astonished, and said to herself, "It cannot be God's will that I should do this," and kneeling before a picture of the Blessed Virgin she felt quite composed. Having heard what had occured to the holy mother at the same hour, she was the more strengthened and encouraged, so that at last she obtained permission, was clothed in that monastery, and lives there now under the name of Sister Angela Caterina.

In the year 1590, Sister Maria Gordi, the school-mistress, being well and strong, Sister

* Italian reckoning.

Mary Magdalene said to the mistress of the novices, "Your school-mistress will die in a few days." The mistress was much distressed, and the more so, as the school-mistress was in perfect health. In six or eight days she fell sick, and in as many more she died. In 1594, a young lady of rank desired to become a nun in that monastery, but her mother refused her consent. Both in and out of rapture Sister Mary Magdalene said that if the mother did not permit her daughter to follow her vocation, she would speedily die, and her daughter would become a nun. The mother died that same year, and the daughter entered the house, where she yet lives. She told one nun to be on her guard, for she would die without the Sacraments; the nun, alarmed at the prediction, repeated it to the prioress. One day she ruptured a blood-vessel in the chest, and threw up blood in such quantity, that she died on the same day without being able to receive the sacraments. In the year 1594, a nun having died, the holy mother was as usual rapt in ecstasy, and saw her soul in Paradise. Afterwards she said that she had seen four pillars of the monastery shake and tremble, which she understood to be four mothers of great judgment and authority, who had all filled the office of prioress, and who were soon to die. To Mother Vangelista, the actual prioress, she said, "Your pillar will stand firm." The four mothers successively died soon after, and Mother Vangelista survived the prediction thirty years, having attained the age of ninety-two.

Seven years before the holy mother herself died, speaking one day to some of the novices, whose mistress she then was, she called some of the party by name, saying, "You will be present at my death," passing over the rest. One of these latter, named Sister Lisabetta, thought that as she had not been named, she should certainly die before the Saint, and said to her, "Mother, assist me at my death," to which she replied, "I shall, indeed, be living at the time of your death, but I shall not be able to assist you." And so it came to pass; for all whom she had not named, died, and when Sister Lisabetta died, the holy mother was in bed dangerously ill, and as she had predicted, could not assist her. All the rest were present at her own happy passage.

In the year 1598, Maria de Berti entered the house, not to become a nun, but to satisfy an aunt of the House of Medici, who wished her to be there. She herself was very much averse to it, as she wished to enter the monastery of Sta. Caterina, in which she had been educated, and where indeed she had placed her affections. One day, seeing the holy mother in rapture, she asked her if she believed that she must be a nun of that house, to which she replied, "I not only believe but am certain that you will be one of us." The young lady thought it impossible, and had great difficulties; but the holy mother, as though she could see her very thoughts, said, "Jesus will send his dew and soften hearts, and you will surmount

every difficulty." After the young lady had left the monastery, the holy mother said, that were an angel to tell her the contrary, she should believe him to be a demon. So it came to pass, for after going away she who before had no inclination, changed her mind, surmounted every difficulty, and entered taking the name of Maria Maddalena. She had had a companion in the convent of Santa Caterina, a most innocent girl, who had been there four years for her education, and knew nothing of the world. When she heard of the fields, she asked how they were made; and if the Desert were praised in the Lives of the Fathers, she, feeling a great desire to be there, fancied that it was just outside the convent gate. She was named Francesca Sommai, and Sister Maria Maddalena Berti, greatly wishing to have her with her, commended her to the prayers of the holy mother. The latter one day when in rapture being asked if she thought that Signora Francesca Sommai would be a nun in that monastery, replied, "Jesus has shown her to me in our habit." Another day some novices in conversation with the saint, begged her to pray that this young lady might come amongst them. She replied, "I have no doubt that Francesca will be a nun here; on the contrary, I know it will be so, but she will not yet be in your company." So it happened, for Francesca, after remaining two years at the monastery of Santa Caterina, left it, and entered their house on trial; but as in the beginning she would have desired greater

austerities and more penances, she remained so irresolute and hesitating that the holy mother said in rapture, "This dove still flutters." At last on Good Friday great light was given to Francesca, who made up her mind and remained. But by the time she was clothed, they who had so greatly desired to have her with them, were no longer in the noviceship. She took the name of Maria.

Sister Maria Vincenza Dati had been sick in the monastery for the space of six years, during which time she was often under medical care. In 1592 she had a fever of eighteen months' duration, so that the medical men thought badly of her case. She commended herself to the prayers of the holy mother, who, after having communicated and prayed, called her to her saying, "Sister, have faith in God; Jesus will restore your health." Then after a short prayer, she made the sign of the cross over her, saying, "You will be healed by little and little, so that you will appear to amend naturally, and as I have prayed for more than this, I tell you that you will live many years in the community, that you will have good health, and be able to keep all the rules and to labour with the others." Her prediction was fulfilled. She was cured in about the space of three months, and for sixteen years after enjoyed good health, always observing the rules of the community with the others, to her great joy and consolation.

A lady who desired to have children, recommended herself to the prayers of the holy mo-

ther, who assured her that she would have a daughter, but that being obtained by prayer, she must be consecrated to God in holy religion, otherwise both mother and daughter would have many sorrows. The child was born and grew up, but instead of complying with the injunction of the saint, the mother married her to a noble marquis; not long after, this marquis was executed as a rebel to his prince, and both mother and daughter were involved in the greatest sorrow and calamity. Another time she said that the Lord had chosen a girl to serve Him as a nun in that monastery, but that if she did not correspond with her vocation she would have many sorrows in the world, and that if her mother should prevent or dissuade her she would be punished by God. The girl did not follow her vocation, and fell into many afflictions, and the mother who dissuaded her was punished by God with a cancer, which gradually infected her whole body, and terminated her life in exquisite sufferings.

A sick nun of holy life ardently desired to receive the most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and on that account recommended herself to the prayers of the holy mother, who told her to be prepared, for that at the hour when the other sisters were communicated, Jesus would come and console her also. She did so prepare herself; the Host disappeared invisibly from the hands of the priest, and though he sought for it most carefully he could never find it. The sick nun, however, afterwards confessed that

our Lord had favoured her by communicating her, so that she sensibly received communion, as the holy mother had predicted.

When the Most Serene Princess Maria de Medici was, in the year 1600, declared Queen of France, and solemnly espoused by proxy in the cathedral to Henri Quatre, King of France, by the assistance of the legate, Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, who performed the espousals; before she left Florence for France, she wished to visit Sister Mary Magdalene, and took with her the Grand Duchess, the Duchess of Mantua, elder sister to the queen, and the Duchess of Bracciano; but though the license given by the Pope to the queen, allowed them all three to enter, they remained outside the grate, and the queen entered alone, and retiring to speak with Sister Mary Magdalene, she entreated her to obtain for her by her prayers three favours from God; first, that the temporal kingdom might never cause her to lose that which is eternal, since had she feared that, she would rather have been a beggar, and asked alms from door to door, than have accepted royalty, and therefore she prayed that that greatness in which God had been pleased to place her, might never be the occasion of her losing the grace of God. The second favour desired by the queen was that the king her husband might love her; and the third that she might have sons. In her turn the holy mother asked three favours of the queen; the first was that she should use her influence with

the king to induce him to receive again into his kingdom the Fathers of the Company of Jesus, telling her that this was one of the greatest services which she could render to God for the good of this kingdom. The second was, that she should endeavour to extirpate heresy, and to bring the kingdom into the state in which it was in the time of St. Louis. The third thing which she required was, that the queen should be a lover of the poor; and she added that if these three things were done, the queen might rest assured that the Lord would grant her desires, and especially that He would give her male offspring. After her departure the saint predicted many times in that year that the queen would have more than one son, as came to pass, and when she received intelligence of the birth of the first son, she caused the novices to say a Te Deum in thanksgiving, saying, "This is not enough, we must ask for a second, and I believe we shall obtain him." For this she made continual prayers to God, applying to this object all the good which she might do on Saturdays. Her prayers, as has been seen, were answered, and she declared that she did all this, that this flourishing kingdom might not fall into the hands of heretics.

Sister Maria Gianfigliazzi was professed, and the holy mother declared in rapture that she would soon die, which she did in six months after that time. Three days after her death, the saint saw her soul go to Paradise, and was also made to know that another sister, Maria Inno-

cenza Dati, would shortly die, and the latter, who at the time of the prediction was in perfect health, died shortly after.

Two sick persons, Signor Filippo Caccia and another, being commended to her prayers, she declared that Signor Filippo would die, but that the other would recover.

Sister Benedetta Vettori being rather unwell, the holy mother said to her sister who was a nun, "What would you say if your sister were to die?" She was distressed at these words, and the holy mother said, "Do not afflict yourself, but submit to the will of God." She died a month after. She frequently predicted the time of her own death. In 1606 she was so ill that the medical men told the prioress that she ought to receive Extreme Unction. The prioress repeated this order to her, when she said, "Be assured, mother prioress, that I shall not die so soon, for my time is not yet come;" and she survived a year. Frequently when in health she told the same prioress, that though thirty years her junior, she should die before her, and so it came to pass.

About a year before her death, Sisters Maria Maddalena Berti and Maria Sommai went to visit her as she lay in her bed, when the former said, "Mother, I shall not be able to survive your death; pray come and fetch me three days after." Sister Alessandra de Beccuto, who was then nursing the holy mother, hearing this, said playfully, "O yes, mother, pray satisfy her. Take her with you to Paradise." The holy

mother with a happy countenance turned to the two sisters, and said in a low voice, "I shall not come for you, but for Sister Alessandra." They thought she said this playfully, for Sister Alessandra was strong and robust. The holy mother died, and two months and a half after, Sister Alessandra followed her. In 1607 Sister Ursula Vivuoli having died on the 25th of April, the nuns informed the holy mother of her death, when she said, "I too shall die on this day month." One of the nuns then said, "I should not like you to die on that day, for it will be Ascension Day." "No," replied the saint, "I shall be here on Ascension Day." And so it was, for the Ascension fell on the 24th, and she died the same year on the 25th of May, just a month after Sister Ursula, as she had predicted. On the 13th of May of the same year, the physicians said that she could not last many days longer, and that therefore the Holy Oil could be given her. The confessor, Signor Vincenzo Puccini, anointed her, and having first intended to go to the hermitage of Monte Senario, he was unwilling to go on account of the approaching death of Sister Mary Magdalene, which the holy mother having heard, she said to him, "Father, go confidently to Monte Senario, for you will find me alive at your return; and induce those fathers to pray for me, that I may be saved." He went, returned, and found her yet living: indeed, she survived many days after his return. Whilst Sister Mary Magdalene was in her extremity, Sister Maria Vittoria Ridolfi was ill in the same

monastery, and the prioress told Sister Mary Magdalene to pray to God for her recovery; the holy mother replied, "It is the will of God that she should die a few days after myself." And so it came to pass, Sister Vittoria dying six days after Sister Mary Magdalene. But I should never end, were I to attempt to write all her predictions.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THIS HOLY MOTHER SEES THINGS DISTANT AND ABSENT.

This holy mother had also the especial grace of seeing things absent as though they were present. She said in rapture that Signor Pier Francesco Santucci had died at such an hour, and that he was saved through the merits of Christ and intercession of St. Francis, to whom he was wont to recommend himself every day. His daughter, Sister Maria Angela, a nun of that monastery, knew nothing of it, but immediately sent home to see, and found that it was even so.

In the year 1586, being in a rapture in the novices' room, she dictated a letter addressed to Sister Caterina de' Ricci, a nun in the monastery of San Vincenzo di Prato, a person of great sanctity and virtue, and Sister Costanza Morelli wrote the letter from her dictation. The letter was sent to Prato, which is about ten miles from Florence, and it was carried by the agent of the

monastery; the saint, who continued for some hours in her rapture, saw when the agent gave the letter to Sister Caterina Ricci, and when Sister Caterina wrote in reply, and fixing her eyes in rapture as though she were reading this reply, she showed by a change of countenance as well as by her words, that the answer was not what she had wished. She also saw Sister Caterina give the letter to the agent, and her rapture being ended, she declared to the appointed mothers, that she had seen those things abovenamed. The agent returned, and the prioress asked at what time he had presented the letter, and received the reply, and it was found that it was at the very time which the saint had been in rapture, and the reply not giving her the desired information, all was confirmed.

One evening in 1591, the holy mother was taking her collation in the refectory with the other mothers, it being a fast day, suddenly rose from table in great haste, and going to the mother-prioress, said to her, "That soul is passing!" No one knew of whom she spoke, but the other nuns followed her, and found that a lay-sister, called Sister Mattia Focardi, who had a wound in her leg, had that day risen and washed, without the least appearance of approaching death, but was now expiring. They commended her soul to God and she soon after died.

Whilst the holy mother was school-mistress of the novices, she was one day speaking to their mistress, Sister Vangelista, when she suddenly

asked her leave to go and find two novices, who were speaking improperly in a distant room. She went, and found them talking of some trifling faults of their neighbour, for which she sharply reproved them.

One day she went into a rapture at table, whilst holding on her fork the morsel which she was about to raise to her mouth; and knew in the spirit that the father-confessor was in the church confessing the nuns. She wanted to speak to him, and in this abstraction of her senses, she rose with the fork in her hand and went to find him. It indeed often happened that being in places distant from the church she would say to the others, "The father-confessor is confessing the nuns in the church, and I see the Blood of Christ descend from heaven on those souls. I too desire to receive that Blood;" and then she went to confession, the nuns going also, when, as she said, they found the father hearing confessions in the church. At another time she saw when the father-confessor left his house or any other place, to come to the monastery, and gave notice to the nuns, who soon after saw him appear.

In the year 1600, on the evening before Corpus Domini, towards seven o'clock, the holy mother, then mistress of the novices, called Sister Maria Maddalena Berti, a novice, who before her entrance had been a penitent of the father-rector of the Company of Jesus in San Giovannino, and to give her pleasure, said, "What do you think the father-rector is about now?" "He

must be at prayer," replied the novice. "Know," said the saint, "that at this moment he is talking with some of his fathers, (naming them,) and I see the Holy Ghost forming all the words he utters."* The next day the father-rector went to hear their extraordinary confessions, and found the holy mother in rapture, who on recovering her senses, and conversing with him, found by comparing the time, that all which she had seen on the preceding evening was true.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SHE DISCERNS HIDDEN THOUGHTS, AND THE SECRETS OF HEARTS.

The holy mother, for the good of souls, also received from God the power of penetrating the secrets of hearts, and discovering thoughts which had never been declared, particularly of those nuns who were committed to her care. This occurred in many instances as may be gathered from the following circumstances. Whilst one of the novices was saying the Divine Office with her, she was overtaken by extravagant thoughts and temptations, of which, however, she gave no exterior sign. The holy mother knew the heart of this young person, and fixing her eyes on her said, "When this office is ended, we must hold a chapter." This being done, she caused the

* This was Virgilio Cepari, the writer of this Life.

novice to humble herself publicly, and her thoughts and temptations being exposed, vanished in that act of humiliation.

At another time, this same religious was reciting the office with the holy mother, during the Octave of All Saints, and whilst reading those lessons of Bede which treat of the glory of Paradise, felt in her heart an intense desire to be in that blessed country, sure of never more offending God. The saint responding to her thoughts, said, "It is not time yet, we must suffer first, and then attain the glory." A junior at complin in choir was surprised by grievous temptations against the religious vows, so that all she could do was to ask of God the grace not to consent to them. It happened that the holy mother being Hebdomadaria, gave holy water to all whilst they were singing the Salve, and when she came to her and blessed her, all the temptations vanished, at which she, being much astonished, asked the holy mother, when out of choir, if God had shown her heart to her. "Yes," she replied, "Jesus showed me your heart, and when He blessed you, commanded the temptations to depart as they did."

The nuns being one day in the work-room, the saint was shown by God that a young person who was there under her care, had in her heart a fault very displeasing to His Divine Majesty. She saw that it was rooted in her in the form of a juniper tree, and that her angel-guardian, by the command of God, endeavoured to eradicate it from her heart, but was unable,

being prevented by two devils, whom she also saw. On seeing this, in a glow of zeal, the saint rose from her seat, took the young person by the arm, led her into the oratory of the novices, and there, rapt in spirit, like another Saint Benedict, began to beat her well, saying, "Away, ye negroes, (meaning the devils,) and leave this soul!" The girl who was new to religion, and but little mortified, was greatly annoyed at this action, and instead of humbling herself, wept with passion; but the holy mother continued to beat her till the Lord granted her grace to know her fault, and to humble herself with lively assurances that she would never repeat it. Another novice wept a whole day, without knowing why, and in the evening at bed-time the saint called all the young persons, saying, "Come, sisters, I wish to see whether the devil will leave this soul. Say the Miserere." And taking a discipline, she began to beat her, and continued to do so till they had repeated the whole psalm, which being ended, the novice remained tranquil and at peace.

A novice of five months' standing had a temptation in her heart which she would not disclose. The holy mother, calling her, declared to her all her thoughts without her having given the slightest indication of them, but advised her in future to keep nothing concealed.

She commanded one of her novices, Sister Maria Bagnesi, to draw a bucket of water from the well every day for a certain time, and having done so to throw it back again. She performed

the obedience, but one day as she was drawing it, the thought came into her mind, it would be much better to put this water into the trough, for it would serve to water the garden; nevertheless, she continued in obedience to throw back the water, and having ended her work, she went to Mother Mary Magdalene, who said, "Have you performed the obedience?" "Yes," said the novice. "But," said the holy mother, "would it not have been better to have thrown the water into the trough, and have watered the garden?" The novice, confounded at this exposure of her secret thoughts, confessed the truth, when the holy mother added, "Learn to obey blindly, without human prudence," and told her to do the same thing for fifteen days more, which she did. This same novice, without telling any one, had girded herself with a knotted cord. As she was sleeping on the third night, the holy mother came and awoke her, saying, "Sister, take care what you do, for you are not performing the will of God." The novice, not understanding this, asked, "In what?" when she replied, "In that cord which you wear," and commanded her to take it off, which she did, astonished and confounded at having been detected. One of the novices did not wish to communicate, but said nothing. The holy mother accosted her, and said, "Go to communion this morning." One of them went to ask her for a mortification, but asked it through human respect, and not from her heart. The saint did not grant it, but said to her, "God

does not value these sacrifices, but purity of heart and intention." Another went to ask her pardon for a fault, but did so from the counsel of others, and not from her own conviction of error. The saint, knowing this, would not accept the humiliation; but when the young person, after self-examination, discovered the fault, and returned to humble herself, the saint knowing that she now did so from light and conviction, accepted her act kindly. One of the novices was hearing a sermon with exterior composure, but with interior distraction; when the the saint, who was by her side, said, "Attend to the sermon." She recollected herself and was astonished. Another desired to justify herself to the saint, respecting something which had occurred to her in the presence of others; but Sister Mary Magdalene, perceiving her intention, said, "Sister, since your mouth is silent, let your heart be silent too. Keep what you thought of telling me to yourself." She discovered that one of her novices despised another in her heart, who was simple, and said to her, "Sister, if that novice has not all those exterior qualities which you believe yourself to possess, Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos." These words were so effective, that they changed contempt into love. A novice went into the choir interiorly disturbed and uneasy, but apparently calm. On entering the choir, the saint heard herself called, and replied, "Ave Maria;" when the novice said, "No one called you, mother mistress." The saint made a sign to her to

follow her, and then told her that she had been enjoined by Saint Catherine not to allow her to enter the choir till she had given her a penance for that hidden fault; she reproved and gave her a discipline, and by that penance the fault was cancelled, and the novice calmed.

A lay-sister, being ill, wished for some food proper for the sick, and said to herself, "If Mother Magdalene knew that I desire and could relish this, she would send it me, for she could easily get it, being ill herself." In a little time, a nun came from Mother Magdalene, bringing the sister the very thing she wanted.

She said to a nun, when in rapture, "Soul, Jesus will grant you what you ask." This nun had an interior disquiet, and had committed a fault without having named it to any one. Some days after, Mother Magdalene happening to find her, took her aside, and said, "This is what you asked of God," and told her what it was; "but you present an impediment to grace," which was the fact. The next morning, after communion, she called her aside again and gave her her hair-shirt, saying, "Wear this for only three hours; and I tell you from God, that that thing shall never again distress you." She did so, and never after felt the uneasiness. Once, to console one of her young people who was in affliction, the saint called another mistress, and whilst they were all three together in a cell, another young person, a scholar of this mistress, wanted to speak to her, and being unable, said in her heart with a little impatience, "This girl

is not content with her own mistress, but must take ours from us!" However, nothing of this was expressed outwardly. The saint on going out, found her, and said, "Sister, when you are tempted and afflicted, I will help you, though I am not your mistress," when the young person, in confusion, asked her pardon.

There not being room for the novices to say the office in the choir, they remained outside; but one of them, Sister Angela Caterina, much wished to enter. The saint left her place, and going out, took her by the hand, saying, "Come in, Sister Angela Caterina." She blushed, wondered, and took the obedience. This same novice was set to watch the saint on the night before her death, and was afraid to be alone, lest she should die, but the holy mother perceiving what passed in her mind, said, "Come cheerfully, Sister Angela Caterina, for when I die, all the nuns will be present." Could you have spoken with the nuns who were her subjects or companions, you would have heard many such instances from them, which for brevity's sake I pass by. However, what has been related is enough to show that she penetrated the secrets of hearts.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SHE SEES THE STATE OF MANY SOULS IN PARADISE, PURGATORY, AND HELL.

Amongst the many privileges which it pleased God to bestow on this holy mother, was that of seeing the state of different departed souls; and amongst many, it seems to me that one of her most remarkable visions was that of April 4th, 1600. On that day she was rapt in spirit in the novitiate, and was permitted to behold the glory of the Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga, S. J., when surprised at the sight of an object so transcendent, she began to speak, interposing between her sentences the pauses which are here marked by lines, "O what glory is enjoyed by Aloysius, son of Ignatius! I could never have believed it, had it not been declared to me.....I should not have thought that there was, so to speak, so much glory in heaven as that which I see enjoyed by Aloysius.....I say that Aloysius is a great saint.....We have saints in the Church, whom I do not believe to be in such glory as Aloysius," this referred to the bones and relics of the saints, which were kept in the reliquaries of the church. "I would go through the world and say that Aloysius, son of Ignatius, is a great saint, and I would I could show his glory to all, that all might glorify God.....He has this glory because he was in-

terior! There is no comparison between the interior and the exterior.....Aloysius whilst here below, contemplated the Lord with open mouth." She meant to say that that blessed one loved the interior inspirations sent by God to his heart, and sought as much as possible to correspond with them.. ....." Aloysius was an unknown martyr; for he who loves Thee, O my God, knows Thee to be so great, so infinitely amiable, that it is a martyrdom to him to find that he cannot love Thee as he desires, and that Thou art not loved, but offended by creatures .....Moreover, he inflicted martyrdom on himself." She here alluded to his voluntary penances. "O how much he loved when on earth, wherefore he now enjoys God in the fulness of love in heaven. He wounded with arrows the heart of the Word, whilst he was mortal, and now that he is in heaven, those arrows rest in his heart, for he understands and enjoys those communications which were merited by those arrows—his acts of faith and union." She also saw that that beatified soul fervently prayed in heaven for those who had given him spiritual help on earth, wherefore she said, "I also would exert myself for the help of souls, that they may go to Paradise, and aid me by their prayers as Aloysius does those who aided him on earth." Here the rapture ended. Besides being printed, it was authenticated in 1606, by Monsignor Alessandro Marzi Medici, archbishop of Florence, in the process formed for the beatification of the Blessed Aloysius, and is now published and

proved by many depositions on oath in the process formed by apostolical authority for the beatification and canonization of the holy virgin.

The mother of Sister Mary Magdalene having died September, 1590, she being rapt in ecstasy saw her, fifteen days after her death, ascending to Paradise encircled by glory and accompanied by her patron saints, and she received from her three instructions; 1st, that she should endeavour as much as possible to increase in holy humility; 2ndly, that she should be a true and perfect observer of obedience; 3rdly, that she should in all things exercise prudence. Having given her these injunctions she disappeared, and went to taste eternal joys. A short time after she also saw the soul of a revered priest, who for the love of God had worn himself out in spiritual exercises, and enriched with glory already enjoyed the heavenly country. Whenever the nuns of the monastery passed from this life to another, it was usual for St. Mary Magdalene to see in rapture the state of each soul, and very often she saw those of other monasteries, of her relations and other seculars; and in particular, a nun of the monastery having died on the 5th of June, 1589, Sister Mary Magdalene, who had constantly nursed her during her sickness, whilst her body was yet in the church, moved by divine inspiration, went to the grating of the chapter-room, whence she could see the body, and was there suddenly rapt in an ecstasy, in which she saw this sister's soul rise to the enjoyment of Paradise, and she consequently broke out into these words: "Farewell,

sister, farewell, blessed soul, you go to heaven in the form of a pure dove, leaving us all below! O how beautiful are you! who can ever describe your beauty? How short a time you have been in those flames! Your body is still unburied, and your soul flies to beatific glory. Now you already see what I told you whilst you were yet on earth, that you would hereafter think your sufferings nothing when compared with the glory reserved for you by Jesus in Paradise." At the same time it was shown to the holy mother that this blessed soul, having suffered beyond measure in this life, and prized the holy indulgences granted through the merits of Jesus, had been detained in Purgatory only fifteen hours. Her body was buried, and the rapture ended.

In the autumn of 1598 I went to the monastery to hear the extraordinary confessions, when I was told by the holy mother and others of a young nun named Sister Maria Benedetta Vettori, who desired to confer with me respecting her interior. They therefore begged me to hear her, and to make inquiries respecting her gifts and graces, as they believed her to be a person very dear to God, and abounding in heavenly favours, especially that of obtaining whatever she asked of God in prayer. I anxiously awaited her coming. When she came she did not at first mention her name, but from the delicacy of her conscience I perceived the great light which God had given her, and guessed who she was. The confession being ended, she asked me questions concerning twelve or fifteen spiritual practices of great re-

finement and perfection, and as soon as she was satisfied I asked her if she were resolved on opening her heart, and sincerely telling me what God had wrought in her soul. She readily replied in the affirmative, and did so. I found that she had great self-contempt, and that had she not been restrained, she would have made others believe that she was an imperfect person of very little judgment. She felt a holy envy of St. Alexis, who knew how to keep himself hidden and despised. She regarded herself as the least of all the community, and submitted even to the novices. She greatly lamented being beloved by her mistress, which she was on account of her virtues; and as she placed her before the others as an example, she began to abstain from exterior good works, that she might not be known. Her obedience was so blind and prompt, that they were obliged to take care what they commanded her to do. She did such violence to herself by mortifying herself and vanquishing the natural vivacity of her will, as to weaken her physical powers and her head, but in a short time she became mistress of herself and of her appetites, and most mortified in her exterior senses. In short, she was Benedetta (blessed) in name and in deed. I particularly asked her if it were true that she obtained whatever she asked of God in prayer. She replied with a distinction, which was, that when she asked spiritual or other blessings for herself, the Lord heard and answered her prayer, and she named some graces which she had received after earnestly entreat-

ing God for them, as the gift of the continued presence of God, the virtue of humility and others. But when asking for others, she said that she was sometimes answered, and sometimes not, and in particular she said, "I asked that a particular infirmity should be taken from one of my relations, and given to me, and she was freed, whilst I was affected by the infirmity: I afterwards asked the same favour for another person without obtaining it;" and from various similar instances I found that what she said was true. I left the house greatly consoled in thinking that souls could be found of such exquisite goodness and perfection in which God could take pleasure and delight. At the end of October, whilst they were praying in the college, I was called to the door by the agent of these nuns, who was sent by the mother-prioress, to ask me to say a mass for this young nun, who was dead. "How dead?" said I, "and why did not mother-prioress inform me of her illness?" He replied that there had been no time, for the fever had suddenly attacked her, and carried her off on Thursday evening at eight o'clock. I returned to my room, and from the high opinion I entertained of her sanctity, I immediately knelt down, and commended myself to her, and then went into the church to say mass for her soul. The holy mother had constantly nursed the spouse of Christ, not only because she was wont to do so for all, but because she greatly loved her, and enjoyed her spirit, and whilst she stood near her bed, in her last moments,

she saw a multitude of angels composing a crown for her, and awaiting with exultation the moment when she should expire, to conduct her to a place of safety, and present her to the Most Holy Trinity, which they did. She saw that soul being led to a place of safety, like a little dove with a golden head, but at the time she said nothing. After her death Sister Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia remained with the holy mother all night in charge of the body. When all the rest were gone, about three hours after her death, Sister Maria Pacifica said, "May we believe the soul of this sister to be in Paradise, or Purgatory?" "Neither in Paradise nor in Purgatory," replied Sister Mary Magdalene. At these words Sister Maria Pacifica was greatly terrified, not understanding their meaning. She, however, asked no further then, but two hours after, she said, "Shall we say the office for this sister?" "Let us recite it," replied the saint, and beginning to recite the Vesper Psalms, at the end of the first Psalm Sister Maria Pacifica said, "Gloria Patri," &c. but immediately correcting herself, said, "I have made a mistake, 'Requiem eternam.'" "Say not that you have made a mistake," said the saint, "for I believe this soul needs no more Requiems." The sister still did not know what to infer from this, but did not presume to make any inquiries, and the thing remained as it was. On the Saturday morning the service for the departed soul was performed, the nuns being in choir, and whilst mass was being sung, the saint at the

Sanctus was rapt in ecstasy, and saw that soul enjoying the Supreme Good in celestial glory, and robed in a golden mantle, which she had received as the reward of her ardent charity. Every finger had its ring, and her crown surpassed in value that of a nun of high perfection, who had died there some years before. The reason of this was, that the latter, though suffering greatly, was conscious of her sufferings, whereas Benedetta had so great a desire of suffering, that to herself she appeared to endure nothing. Moreover, for having always spoken well of her neighbours, and conducted herself towards them with all tenderness, sweetness, and compassion, she received as a reward a liquour of surpassing sweetness, which distilled into her mouth from that of Jesus, imparting to her an ineffable bliss. The saint also saw that her glory exceeded the beatitude of many virgins of the monastery, and that she fearlessly gazed on the Humanity and Divinity of the Word. Wherefore, after having been a long time in admiring rapture, through joy at such a delightful sight, the saint began to exclaim at intervals, "O happy thou, who knewest how to bear the hidden treasure!—O what a great thing to be singular amongst the singular, and yet regarded as an ordinary one!—The Word, had He merely regarded the works, would have had little to reward, for short has been the time for working.—But O, the goodness of God, who rewards every thought, and word, and wish! Great and continual were thy works, and practised by few, for they were interior! .....

O the greatness of interior works, so little understood! ..... One interior work is worth a thousand years of exterior exercises. Doubtless, a precious gem is worth more than a piece of gold, but if the one shines more than the other, where is the remedy? ..... O my little golden-headed dove, when thou wert here on earth with us, whether moving, or eating, or working, thou wert ever united to God!.....I marvel not, O my God, that Thou hast called her to Thyself, for it were not just that a creature so closely corresponding in union with Thee, should be detained in this prison.....But, O my Jesus, tell me, since this soul was so much beloved by Thee, why didst Thou detain her from Thy vision for those hours?" (She had been for five hours detained from the beatific vision; not to suffer as other souls in Purgatory, but in a place apart, where she experienced no other pain than that of being debarred from the vision and enjoyment of God.) The saint resumed..... "Yes, I understand it was because she was a little too anxious on perceiving herself to be an occasion of vexation to her neighbour; she was too much afflicted, and at that moment her union with Thee ceased. All the remainder of her time she was united to Thee, and as that affliction only sprang from self-love, for penance and purification, she remained those five hours deprived of the presence of God. They who to us would be occasions of offence, were to her but as steps which led her to Thee, for neither their malice nor their hatred could injure her!"—She meant

the devils, who could gain no victory over this blessed soul, either by their interior temptations or by a peculiar annoyance, which by divine permission they inflicted on her body, as her great humility and perfect obedience surmounted all without any detriment, so that, on the contrary, all co-operated for her good. After a little pause, the saint continued thus....."Blessed the womb which bore thee!.....Blessed the Carmelite Order, which for a time possessed thee!..... Now, in thine own land, thou dost not walk with drooping head, as when thou wert with us below; but thou dost raise it in joyful confidence amidst all the heavenly choirs. I thank my God, who has granted me the grace in some measure to aid thee in attaining that glory which thou dost now so richly enjoy. Ask Him to give me those eyes for others, which He gave me for thee. Beseech Him also to give me that confidence, to which thou didst so much persuade me. Thou dost no longer need to love the rules of the order, but obtain that grace for my little doves, (the novices, whose mistress she then was,) and intercede for all, that we may regard each other as thou didst regard all." Having spoken these words she remained silent for a time, and then recovered from her rapture, which had lasted about two hours.

In the same manner, on the 3rd of February, she saw in rapture the soul of a sister of her monastery, who, clothed in glory and rich in merit, went to enjoy the Supreme Good in heaven between her angel-guardian and her patron St.

Miniatus, after having been sixteen days in Purgatory, where she had been detained by God for three reasons. The first was, that being very ingenious at work, she had worked on festivals without necessity; the second, that being a senior mother, she had through human respect neglected to declare to the mother-prioress and the father-director an inspiration given her by God for the good of the monastery; the third cause of her detention was her too great love of her relations. The saint was also shown the three reasons which had abridged her pains; of which the first was, the anxious care with which she had always endeavoured to maintain the purity and simplicity of her order; the second, her great charity for all the nuns; and the third, her having always put a good construction on everything, and drawn good from all that occurred.

She likewise saw souls in Purgatory, as may be seen from the following examples. She saw that the mother of a young person had died and gone to Purgatory, for having during her lifetime prevented her daughter from becoming a nun, which she did after her death. On the 14th of June, 1587, as she was praying for a deceased brother, she in ecstasy saw him suffering in Purgatory, when, as she began to weep for pity, she said, "O thou wretched, yet blessed one! O suffering, yet glorious soul! These pains are great, and yet are endured; who could understand this? Thou wouldst not hear me whilst here above, and now thou wouldst that I should

hear thee!" But as all this, together with many things concerning Purgatory and its heavy pains, are already printed in the second part of her Raptures, I say no more on the subject here.

Another time, in the year 1589, whilst praying before the Blessed Sacrament, she saw the soul of a sister suffering in Purgatory for her faults, and outwardly clothed in a mantle of fire, but wearing beneath a pure white robe. This sister was in the church adoring the Blessed Sacrament with great reverence, and the saint understood that this mantle of fire and flame, which completely enfolded her, and her having to honour the Blessed Sacrament for one hour every day in the church of the monastery, had been given her in penance, for having omitted many times to receive holy communion through negligence; and that the white robe, which greatly consoled her, was the reward of that virginity and purity which she had always preserved. At another time, in the same year, she saw that soul, purified and lovely, take its flight to Paradise. Two criminals having been led to execution near the monastery, whilst Sister Mary Magdalene was in ecstasy before the Blessed Sacrament, she was heard to pray earnestly for them, and in that rapture she saw that one of them, who accepted death in penance and satisfaction for his sins, conforming himself to the Divine will, so greatly pleased God by that act, that he would instantly go to Paradise, and that the soul of the other, who did not die in such perfect dispositions, would for a short time remain in Purgatory. The good

disposition of these two was in a great measure attributed to the prayer of the saint; for in this rapture she with great fervour offered for them the Passion and Blood of Jesus Christ, and after a time declared that both had obtained salvation. Afterwards the seculars declared that both had well prepared themselves for death, but one better than the other.

She also in her transports beheld some souls condemned to eternal pains, and especially on the 22nd of December, 1594, a sinner dying who had led a most vile life; she saw him sentenced to eternal flames, and that another who died about the same time was similarly sentenced to hell; and it was shown to her in particular, that one of these souls was condemned for having despised the treasures, that is, the indulgences of the Church, and thus rendered himself unworthy of the mercies of God. She was so overwhelmed at this sight, as to be inconsolable, and in her rapture began to weep bitterly. She went about the house uttering words of lamentation and great pity, saying in broken sentences, "O poor souls, become firebrands of hell!—for ever to be deprived of God, and to remain in these pains.—Soon is pastime changed to bitter and endless woe!—O Eternal God, the men of the world discern not these things!" Her words and the grief which she expressed excited great terror and apprehension in all who were present at this rapture.

CHAPTER XXXV.

OF OTHER FAVOURS AND GRACES WHICH THE HOLY VIRGIN RECEIVED FROM GOD, IN HER ECSTASIES AND RAPTURES.

In the frequent raptures and ecstasies of St. Mary Magdalene, God not only revealed to her things distant and future, manifested to her the secrets of hearts, and gave her to behold the state of many souls departed, as has been seen; but also showed her so many other favours, that it would be difficult to enumerate them, therefore we here only particularize the principal. Persons who wish to see them more at large, may read them, as they have been already printed.

Passing, then, over the transports, intelligences, and revelations which she enjoyed during the forty days after her profession, of which I have already spoken, I will first mention, that whilst yet in her novitiate, in the eighteenth year of her age, on the 5th of February, 1585, a day called by people of the world, the Berlingaccio, or the Thursday before Lent, a pious procession was made in the monastery to appease the anger of God, which worldlings on that day provoke by so many offences, and during this procession she was rapt in ecstasy, when she beheld Jesus, in the form in which Pilate presented him to the people saying, "Ecce Homo!" at which sight, being moved to compassion by the suffer-

ings of her beloved Spouse, she broke forth into these words, "O my Jesus, why cannot I bear the pain, scorn, and contempt, which I see inflicted on Thee by those traitors who exhibit Thee to the people! Why cannot I remove from Thy head that piercing crown, which so much wounds Thee, and place it on my own, since for my sake Thou dost wear it and suffer all these pains and torments!" Having said this, she perceived that Jesus would satisfy her desire of suffering, by giving her His sufferings in the bundle of myrrh; and turning to St. Bernard, who wrote so well of this bundle of myrrh, and so well knew how to gather it for himself, and place it in his bosom, she earnestly besought him to assist in disposing her to receive it worthily, and having named successively all the instruments of the Passion, she extended her arms as receiving the gift, and crossing her hands on her breast said, "Fasciculus myrrhæ dilectus meus mihi, inter ubera mea commorabitur." Having said this, she sank all trembling on the earth, appearing to suffer most bitter pains, (which she afterwards declared herself to have suffered in reality,) from which the gracious Jesus, who ever remembers mercy, was pleased to deliver her, by giving Himself to her arms in the form of an infant, as He came forth from the pure womb of Mary. She had long greatly desired to see Him in this form, and was by this favour completely satisfied. Nor was that a smaller favour which she received in the same year on the 24th of March, the Vigil of

the Annunciation, when contemplating the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word in meditating on these words of St. John, "Verbum caro factum est," she was rapt in an ecstasy, which lasted eleven hours successively, from twenty-two in the evening till nine of the night, when God gave her this especial grace, that by the hand of St. Augustine these same words, "Verbum caro factum est," should be inscribed on her heart in letters of gold, in which favour she exulted, feeling that she could now say, "Vivo ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus."

On the 11th of April, 1585, which was the Thursday in Passion-week, she was made partaker of the pains in which the Son of God expired on the cross, which by their intensity caused her not only to weep, but made the perspiration fall in drops from her face. Greater wonders yet appeared in her during Holy Week, for on the 15th of April, being in the garden with the other sisters, she, as was usual with her, was called by God, and on hearing the Divine Voice, stopped, and leaned against a post; she would have gone into an ecstasy there, but the nuns, seeing this, carefully took her to a room, which she had no sooner reached than she fell on her knees in ecstasy before a crucifix, and placed herself in the posture of St. Francis, when he received the sacred Stigmata; saying five times to Jesus, "Absconde me in vulneribus humanitatis tuæ;" and after having united her members and senses to the members and senses of Christ crucified, and placed all her powers in those of Christ, she

remained for about the space of two hours in the contemplation of the most sacred Passion, and then saw that from His sacred wounds, Jesus, as it were, shot rays of fire into her hands, feet, and side, which were so sharp and powerful, as to leave there the impressions of the sacred stigmata. As soon as she had received them all her pain and sadness ceased, and she remained full of joy and pleasure at beholding in herself the wounds of her Lord, which were ever after visible to herself, though to her great joy they did not appear externally. After this she remained united to Jesus by an act of perfect love. The abstraction continued till eleven, (night) after which she recovered her consciousness. Three days after, at eighteen o'clock, on Holy Thursday in the evening, (at which hour Jesus is believed to have taken leave of His holy mother,) she was again rapt, and remained in rapture for twenty-six hours successively, that is, from eighteen o'clock on Thursday to twenty-four, and through the whole night following to twenty on Friday, witnessing all the Passion, step by step, and enduring most acute pains, not only in mind but also physically, being found worthy to share in soul and body the torments of the holy Passion of our Lord. This same favour was renewed seven years after on Holy Thursday, April 27th, 1592, when in a rapture of twenty-four hours, beginning like the other at the eighteenth hour of Holy Thursday, and finishing at the same hour on Friday, she in her own person repre-

sented to the life all the actions and sufferings of Christ, in such exact conformity to the writings of the four Evangelists, that the spectators clearly saw all that they wrote explained and illustrated by all her movements, gestures, words, and actions, and so vividly was the idea of the Passion conveyed to the nuns who were present, that they seemed actually to witness on Mount Calvary the death which Jesus endured for the love of us.

In another rapture of the 28th of April, in the same year 1585, she had another signal favour, which was, that in the presence of St. Austin and St. Catherine of Sienna, whose festival commenced on that day, she was espoused by Jesus, (the ring being placed on her finger by her Beloved Spouse,) and enriched by many other gifts. Six days after, on the 4th of May, the feast of St. Monica, she was in rapture for four hours, during which, in the presence of the Queen of Heaven and other saints, Jesus placed the crown of thorns on the head of this His spouse, to give her greater honour and conformity to Him. On the 7th of May, about the twenty-fourth hour, (evening,) the saint was again in ecstasy, and understood that for three successive nights she would be thus deprived of her senses, when the Three Divine Persons would try her in different ways. On the first night, the Holy Ghost began to try her, the second night, the Word, and on the third night she was tried by the Eternal Father. During these raptures she enjoyed most beautiful revelations,

which are printed at large in the fifth book of her Raptures. On the vigil of Pentecost, 1585, she had a rapture which exceeds all belief. Whilst in the work-room of the novices, she heard God call her, and replied in rapture, "Ecce venio, citó venio, venio citó," and instantly falling into an ecstasy, she continued in it for eight successive days and nights, till the morning of the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, and during this whole time she was only so far possessed of her faculties as to be able to take a little bread and water, and to recite the office, sometimes taking a little repose, leaning on the back of a chair, but, on the whole, she did not remain two hours out of ecstasy. In these eight days, she seven times received the Holy Ghost, under the various forms of a fire, a river, a dove, a pillar, a cloud, a wind, and burning tongues. The mother-prioress at that hour caused a small bell to be rung to warn the nuns, who all instantly ran to the room in which this blessed young creature was rapt in ecstasy, to see her in that attitude of devotion in which she received the Holy Ghost, and to mark her wonderful gestures and her words of fire, so full of the love of God, as to produce the greatest devotion and consolation in all present. From that time to this it has been the custom in that monastery, in memory of this circumstance, to ring the little bell every year during the entire Octave of Pentecost, when all the nuns assemble in choir, and at the hour in which St. Mary Magdalene received the Holy Ghost, they sing the Sequence

"Veni Sancte Spiritus," &c. In this rapture she enjoyed those high and spiritual consolations which collectively form the third printed part of her Raptures. All these events occurred whilst she was yet in her novitiate, and in this rapture Jesus promised her that every Friday at the hour when He expired on the cross, He would give her a participation of His Spirit. This promise was made in these words, "On all Fridays, at the hour of My death, if thou be watchful, thou shalt receive My Spirit." On every Friday, therefore, at three o'clock, she was observed to give some indication that the gift was granted to her. Either she was for a short time rapt in ecstasy, or her whole person trembled, or else she was abstracted in a profound silence. Sometimes with great fervour she uttered these words, "Jesus expires—let us ask for His Spirit!" or, "Let us open our hearts to the Spirit of Jesus," and other similar expressions. She had many other most useful revelations in her raptures and ecstasies, on the Life of Christ, the Incarnation, the institution of the Holy Sacrament of the Last Supper, on the Passion, the descent of Christ to Limbo, the resurrection, and the ascension. She also explained many passages of Scripture, the Psalms and the Canticles, spoke of the life and glory of the Queen of Angels, Mary, ever Virgin, to whom she was ever most devoted, and in particular of her nativity and annunciation. She had many beautiful visions of the Blessed Mary, and once in particular, the most Holy Mother of God appeared to her between St. Angelus, the Carme-

lite martyr, and St. Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, and ordered these two saints to instruct her in the virtues of humility and religious poverty, which they did one after the other, leaving her instructions of the highest spirituality.

She saw the glory of many saints, particularly of her advocates, St. James and St. Austin, and many others. In her raptures things were revealed to her of the highest importance to every religious person, either man or woman, and in particular an exercise to be made every morning, with the offer of her entire self to God. The virtues demanded by the religious state, and various other virtues necessary to the true religious, were also revealed to her; besides instructions for the attainment of religious perfection, acts of humiliation before God, of the love of God, and the mode of manifesting gratitude for the blessings daily received from God. She had also revelations and aspirations concerning the religious vows, especially the vow of poverty, and many other similar instructions which will be found in the book of her Raptures, and should be read by every one desirous of ascending to religious perfection. Besides the things above-named, which are already in print, she dictated in rapture many letters to the Pope, to the college of Cardinals, to Cardinal de Medici, archbishop of Florence, afterwards Leo XI., to the fathers of the Society of Jesus, and others, in which she spoke of the reform of the Church, and showed the zeal and the spirit which God communicated to her

for His glory, the universal good of the Holy Church, the help of souls, and the reform of the religious orders. These are yet preserved in MS. in her monastery with others.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OF VARIOUS MIRACLES PERFORMED BY THIS HOLY VIRGIN DURING HER LIFE.

Amongst the many gifts and graces with which the Lord was pleased to adorn and enrich this His little virgin spouse, one was the grace and power of working miracles, many of which occurred not only in Florence, but in Lucca, Parma, and other places, as may be seen in the processes. I shall here, however, only name these which were presented first to the Rota, and afterwards to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and which have been approved by the one and the other as true and undoubted miracles; and these are the following: The servant of God, when performing various manual labours with the other nuns in the work-room, was often suddenly rapt in ecstasy, and whilst thus abstracted with her eyes fixed on heaven, she nevertheless cooked, composed ingenious works of art, cut gold, painted images of the saints on paper, and did other things requiring sight and attention. The nuns, standing round her, saw that her senses were abstracted, and that whilst her eyes were fixed elsewhere, she still continued working. To be quite sure whether she

availed herself of the light from the windows, or in any way used her eyes, they bandaged them and closed the shutters, so as completely to exclude the light. Nevertheless, she continued to cook, work, and paint with the same exquisite skill and perfection as when out of rapture. In these occupations she was sometimes engaged for hours, and she is known to have made three rochets in rapture with most beautiful work, and albs, some of them with holy figures, part of them being worked in the dark, with the shutters shut and her eyes bandaged, which appeared miraculous to every one, and has been approved as such.

In the year 1587, Sister Fede di Domenico, a lay-sister of the monastery, was confined to her bed by severe illness. Her whole body was swollen from head to foot, and the muscles had become so much contracted, that the left side was shorter than the right by a palm. Her hands too had become useless, and even her head required to be turned by another, as she had lost the power of voluntary motion, and suffered most intense pain throughout the whole system. This prevented repose, and as she had difficulty in swallowing, she could take very little nourishment, and having been some time in this state, was given over by the medical men. One day in the month of July, she sent for Sister Mary Magdalene, then a junior nun of twenty-one, who replied, "Tell Sister Fede that it is not time yet, but that she must prepare herself, and I will come and visit her to-morrow at vesper time." On the following day about

the hour of vespers, Sister Mary Magdalene fell into rapture, and so entered the oratory of the novices, where kneeling, she prayed for a short time before an image of the Blessed Virgin, then rising, she took this image, which was in a picture, and carried it to the bed where Sister Fede was lying, when having placed it on the bed, Sister Fede, whose hands were before so contracted that she could not use them, took the image and held it. The saint prayed a little, made the sign of the cross over the patient with the image, and then raising her eyes to heaven, said, "Thy will, O my God, be done." No sooner had she uttered these words, than the sick nun became perfectly well. Her pains ceased, the inflammation subsided, her muscles relaxed and became free, her sides were of equal length, and every appearance of sickness being removed, she would have risen, had not the nuns retained her in bed, and as she had before been unable to swallow a mouthful, they immediately gave her some bread. In the evening she supped well, and on the following morning arose perfectly restored, and resumed the services of the monastery.

Signora Caterina Spini, daughter of Signor Carlo Spini, a noble Florentine, was possessed by an evil spirit; and one day having gone with her mother to the grate of the monastery, to visit Sister Mary Magdalene, her distant relation, whilst they were talking together the saint fell into an ecstasy, and immediately the evil spirit began greatly to afflict Caterina, causing her

throat to swell, and saliva to flow from her mouth. She howled, struggled, and threw herself on the ground with frightful gestures. The saint, seeing this, sent directly for the Reverend Agostino Campi, confessor to the nuns, who happened to be in the church, and on his arrival in the parlour where they were, she besought him, still in rapture, to command the spirit to leave that body, when he, who well knew her virtue and holiness, replied, "In virtue of holy obedience, I order you to command that spirit to depart." Then in obedience, the saint with great authority and majesty said to the spirit, "In the name of God I command thee to depart from this body," making the sign of the cross over Caterina. No sooner had she pronounced these words than the spirit departed, Caterina was free, and ceased to struggle and spit, while the swelling of her throat subsided, nor was she ever after during her whole life in any way molested by that evil spirit. Sister Barbara Bassi, a professed nun in the same monastery, had for many years suffered from a malignant disease, caused in the opinion of the physicians by the infection and corruption of the entire mass of the blood. By degrees her flesh was consumed by a virulent humour, and her whole person was covered by eruptions and scales, especially her hands, arms, and the nape of the neck, and as all remedies had failed the physicians declared that she could not long survive. One morning, in the year 1589, the saint, having communicated, went to visit this sufferer, and

having found her in the gallery knelt down with her there, and then with great charity and compassion began to lick the limbs of the patient with her tongue, especially the hands, arms, and nape of the neck, where the disease was most apparent, telling her to have faith and hope in God and the most Blessed Virgin, who would cure her. At the end of two or three days she recovered, and her flesh, which had been full of this loathsome disease, became perfectly clean and smooth.

Sister Pace Colombini, in the same monastery, had become so much disabled in consequence of an apoplectic seizure, as to be unable to move without help, her left side being paralyzed. The medical man who attended her had many times pricked her side, to see if it retained any sensation, but she felt nothing, and had been for some time in that state. One day, in the year 1589, the saint went to visit her, and the mother-prioress being present, Sister Pace begged Sister Mary Magdalene to pray for her, and make the sign of the cross over her. The saint at first had a little reluctance as to the sign, but overcome by charity, she did make it over the patient; and having done so, Sister Pace told the prioress that she began to recover vitality in the paralyzed side. On the following day Sister Mary Magdalene repeated the sign, and the result was an increase of strength and sensation, and a returning power of motion. On the third day the sign was again repeated, when the sister, feeling herself completely restored,

said, "I am cured;" and in a short time rose and continued well ever after, resuming the exercises and labours of the monastery. The physician, meeting her by accident, was stupified, and would not believe that it was indeed Sister Pace. He told her directly to return thanks to God for a great miracle.

Sister Maria Benigna Orlandini, a professed nun in that house, was affected by a contagious disease, supposed to be leprosy, and regarded as incurable by the medical men, as it had baffled all their skill. She therefore had recourse to Sister Mary Magdalene, entreating her to ask her cure from God. On the Feast of St. Catherine of Sienna, April 29th, 1591, the patient having communicated, the saint also made her usual daily communion, and directly after went to find the patient in the infirmary. On her arrival she removed the veil from the head of the sufferer, and having licked with her tongue the head, ears, and nape of the neck, where the disease was most virulent, she ordered her to tell no one what she had done. After a few days she perfectly recovered, losing every trace of the disease.

On the 31st of December, 1591, Sister Mary Magdalene being in rapture, could not receive communion with the other nuns at the usual hour, on which account the father-confessor sent to tell her to go to the infirmary, where he would give her communion with Sister Cherubina Rabatti, a sick professed sister, to whom he was going to carry the holy communion. Sister Cherubina was confined to her bed by a wound in the head,

which the surgeons thought incurable. The confessor took the Blessed Sacrament, and after he had given both communion, Sister Mary Magdalene was rapt in ecstasy, and in that state said to the sick nun, "Sister, unite with me in asking health from the Lord God." Having prayed a little time, she thrice made the sign of the cross over the wound on her head, which instantly closed. The fever and pain ceased, and Sister Cherubina became perfectly well. This same Sister, Cherubina Rabatti, was in the following year, 1592, ill in bed and at the point of death, in consequence of two large wounds in her back accompanied by fever. The holy oil had been administered by the advice of the physicians, when she heard an interior voice saying, "If you desire a cure, go into Sister Mary Magdalene's bed." Sister Mary Magdalene was wont to render great service to the sick, especially to such as were at the point of death, and in her charity to Sister Cherubina, had placed a pallet at the side of her bed, on which she used to sleep, and it was on this that Sister Cherubina felt inspired to lie for her cure. She declared this inspiration to the father-confessor and the mother-prioress, and asked permission to follow it, which being granted, she was, in the presence of the prioress, carried by the infirmarian and the other nuns and placed in the pallet. Hardly had she been there eight minutes, when she was completely healed, and walked back to her bed. On the following day she rose and went to the choir with the other nuns, and her strength being restored, she resumed her office in the monastery.

Sister Maria Caterina Chelli, professed sister of that monastery, had a sore in her right arm near the joint of the wrist, and had for two years been under medical care, without deriving any relief from the remedies applied. The disease, on the contrary, had increased, and a piece of bone had been extracted from the wound; so that the medical men declared it would never heal, and that she would always be lame in that hand. On the 25th of May, 1595, feeling most intense pain in the arm, and not knowing what to do, she went to Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, the prioress, entreating her to help her. She said to her, "Go to Sister Mary Magdalene, and recommend yourself to her, that having worked wonders for others, she would do the same for you." She went directly to find her, and meeting her by accident, earnestly begged her to help her, saying that she had been sent by the prioress. Sister Mary Magdalene, hearing this, and being most obedient, went to find the prioress, and led her into the choir with the sick nun, and all three kneeling before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, Sister Mary Magdalene took the wounded arm of Sister Caterina, unbound it, and turning to the mother-prioress said, "May I remove the dressings from the wound?" She replied, "Remove them if you have faith for her cure." Then Sister Mary Magdalene after a short prayer removed the dressings, and bound up the arm without replacing them, when the pain instantly ceased, and in a short time she was perfectly well, the wound having healed without any ap-

plication. She even used the arm as though it had never been diseased, and the bone had never been extracted. All these miracles have been examined and approved by the Rota and the Congregation of Rites. Many others may be found in the pontifical process, clearly proved by juridical deposition, which, though already published by Signor Vicenzo Puccini, I think it right to add to the foregoing for the honour of the saint. They are as follows:

In the year 1588, in the month of August, a cask of wine was spoiled in the cellar of the monastery, and the cellarer having brought a sample to the prioress, she caused it to be tried by the steward, who declared that it could not be given to the nuns, as it was not wholesome. The prioress was sorry to be obliged to throw it away, as there was a scarcity, and therefore next morning, after Sister Magdalene had communicated, she gave her an obedience to pray to God that the wine might become as good as ever. Being in the apartment of the prioress when she received this order, she fell into an ecstasy, and taking in her hand a picture of St. James, which she accidentally found there, she went with the prioress into the cellar, and made the sign of the cross over the cask, when the wine was restored to its former state, and the cellarer having drawn some carried it to the mother-prioress and the other nuns, who finding it as good as ever, continued to use it in the refectory till the cask was emptied. Sister Angela Santucci was then ill in bed

with a double tertian ague, and in such high fever as to be sometimes delirious. She asked as a favour of the mother-prioress, that a little of this wine might be given her to drink by the hands of Sister Mary Magdalene, as by this means she hoped to be cured. She was gratified by receiving it three times. On the first morning she felt herself better; on the second she was still better; and on the third the fever left her, and she was entirely freed from her illness.

In the year 1602, another cask of wine, containing ten barrels, being spoiled, the prioress, who had learned the remedy, gave the same order to St. Mary Magdalene, who on the following morning, after communion, went with her to the cellar, and there, after praying a short time on her knees, she made the sign of the cross over the cask of sour wine, when, like the other, it at once recovered its flavour, and continued fit for use in the refectory as long as it lasted.

In the month of May, 1591, Messer Agostino Campi, confessor to the monastery, who was seventy-five years of age, became dangerously ill, and was reduced to such extemity as to receive Extreme Unction. This coming to the ears of the Cardinal de Medici, Archbishop of Florence, he thought of sending as his substitute a confessor whom the nuns knew to be very unsuitable to them, and they therefore had recourse to Sister Mary Magdalene, that she might recommend the matter to God. She, being rapt in ecstacy, on the second Sunday after Easter, entreated

of God that He would prolong the life of the confessor till the Assumption of our Lady, and was answered that God would prolong his life not only till Assumption, but till the threatened danger was passed. This promise was completely verified. The confessor was cured, and confessed the nuns as usual, continuing to confess and communicate them till the feast of Corpus Domini, when he again fell sick, and died in the beginning of July, by which time the Cardinal Archbishop had changed his mind. He gave the monastery in his place, Sigr. Francesco Benvenuti, canon and penitentiary of the cathedral, who confessed and communicated them during his whole life, and was a most excellent pastor to them.

Sister Caterina Ginori, a professed sister, had been for three years tormented by the stone, and in the year 1592, was reduced to such imminent danger that the sisters sat up with her by turns night after night. One night, it being St. Mary Magdalene's turn to sit up, Sister Caterina seeing the opportunity, affectionately commended herself to her prayers, that it might please God to give her patience and mitigate her extreme sufferings. On this, the good servant of God instantly disposed herself for prayer. The sufferer slept directly, and on awaking a little after, found herself without pain, and free from her malady, by which she was never afterwards troubled, though she survived many years, and returned to the common exercises of the monastery.

In the same year, Mother Mary Magdalene Mori, being confined to her bed by gout, and as some thought by sciatica, whilst suffering severe pain, heard an interior voice which said, "If you desire to be cured, cause yourself to be carried before Sister Mary Magdalene." She asked and obtained the permission of the prioress, and was carried to a room in which the servant of God was actually in a rapture at the time; she touched her with the part diseased, and instantly recovered, walking back to her cell without assistance. In the same year, 1592, Sister Cherubina Rabatti had a fistula lacrymosa in the eye, which gave her extreme pain, so that the physician and surgeon one day came to the determination to apply the cautery on the following morning. That same night, being in severe pain, she asked our Blessed Lady to obtain for her patience under her intense sufferings, and at the same time she saw that servant of God, Sister Mary Magdalene, appear before her with a lovely and majestic aspect, who with her eyes raised to heaven entreated the Mother of God, and other saints her holy patrons, for the health of this afflicted one. At the same moment, she felt her face pressed, and the affected eye, which she had for many days been unable to open, forcibly unclosed. This pressure on her face, and the opening of the eye, gave her such pain that she fainted, but on reviving she found the eye well and the pain entirely removed.

On the following morning, finding the holy

little virgin, she asked if she had been with her during the night, to which she replied that she had not been with her in person, but that at eleven o'clock at night she had prayed in the novices' oratory to the Blessed Virgin and her holy patrons, for the restoration of her health; by comparison they found that this was the very hour in which Sister Cherubina had seen the vision and recovered. When the physician and surgeon came in the morning to cauterize the fistula, they found it cured, and were amazed at the miracle, which was so complete that the sister was never again attacked by the malady.

The events recorded above, and the great goodness and virtue which she manifested, won for her the entire love and esteem of all the nuns, old and young, who had recourse to her holy counsel in all their wants, spiritual and corporal. The superiors availed themselves of her wonderful light, in the ordinary and extraordinary business of the monastery. In short, in every necessity she was the common refuge of all, and the consolation of that house. They were not scandalized by the fact that she was then only a junior, not twenty years of age, and still in the noviceship with the novices; for no earthly passion, no envy, no human respect assailed these good mothers.

They did not utter calumnies against the raptures and ecstasies which they witnessed; but instructed by her virtuous life, and the example of perfect obedience which she gave to all, as well as by the marvels which she wrought, they

allowed her to lead them as she pleased, and the whole community listened to, believed, and obeyed her as though she had been the actual superior, and the eldest and most experienced nun of the monastery.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SHE RECEIVES FROM GOD A COMMAND TO LIVE ONLY ON BREAD AND WATER, WHICH SHE EXECUTES, AFTER A PROBATION BY THE SUPERIORS.

In the year 1585, Sister Mary Magdalene, being in the dormitory of the novices, was suddenly thrown with violence to the ground, and for some space of time remained like one dead, being rapt in ecstasy. Afterwards she uttered these words, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have of me? perhaps the exterior for the interior?" On the same night, she was, as she afterwards declared, commanded by the Eternal Father to eat nothing but bread and water, excepting on Sundays, when she was to take Lenten food, and all this she was to do in satisfaction for the offences of creatures against the Divine Majesty. On the following day, whilst reciting the office with the prioress and two sisters, she was again thrown to the ground in their presence and rapt in ecstasy with her eyes raised to heaven, when, as though she had been called, she answered, "Adsum;" and then in the Person of the Eternal Father, "I call Thee, that Thou mayst respond

to my vocation and request, as I have already shown Thee." After half an hour had passed, the rapture ended. On the third day after, she was in the dormitory with the novices, and fell in the same way to the ground, saying these words in the Person of the Lord, "Crastina die nihil gustabis, nisi panem et aquam; et si hac non facias, retraham abs te oculos meos;" "but if thou dost what I have shown thee, fulfilling My will and that of My Word, Who with such love has given, and does give Himself to thee, I will delight in thee as I have done till now, and if thou wilt have thy work pleasing to Me, let it be voluntary. This exterior operation which I require of thee must be the mirror of thy mind, and fear not what thine enemy shall do against thee, for I will not suffer him to prevail over thee. I will give thy soul to the care of My angels. The Mother of My only Son shall be thy guardian, that thou mayst never lose the impression of the Passion of the Word which I have engraved on thine heart; and be assured that thy desires shall not be known to thine enemy, the devil, and that I will accomplish all that thou desirest." Here she was silent for some time, and after having said in her own person, "Non moriar, sed adimplebo opera Domini," she recovered from her rapture. She declared the order which God had given her to the mother-prioress and the father-confessor, since she could not execute it without permission, and they, wishing to try if there were any diabolical illusion in this, told her that she must

continue to live as the rest, and take the common food, as they would not allow any nun to lead a singular life. Without reply, she readily obeyed, but when she was served at table with the same food as the rest, and tried in obedience to masticate it, she could not swallow a mouthful. If she used great force and got it down, she was constrained to reject it, and threw up blood with the food from the violent exertion which she had made: whereas, when she took bread only, she swallowed it without difficulty. The same thing also occurred with respect to wine, which she could not swallow, though she could take water easily. The confessor and prioress, seeing in this a clear indication of the Divine will, gave her full permission to adopt the life imposed on her by God, so that on the 25th of May, when the feast of St. Zenobius is observed in Florence, she began to eat and drink bread and water only, and continued this life from 1585 to 1590. During this time she was only twice obliged by infirmity to take Lenten food, once for three, and another time for four weeks.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GOD APPOINTS HER TIME FOR SLEEPING AND MANNER OF DRESSING, WHICH SHE ADOPTS AFTER PROBATION BY HER SUPERIORS.

Almighty God, besides prescribing the diet of this blessed nun, was also pleased to regulate her time for sleep, and the manner of her dress, and on the 16th of May, 1585, in a rapture of two hours' duration, the Eternal Father, having confirmed the order given her to feed only on bread, and to drink only water, commanded her not to give repose to her body at night for more than five hours at a time, and that ordinarily she should sleep on a straw mattress. This order was subsequently confirmed in another rapture on the 5th of July, 1587, in which God showed her that He desired her to walk barefoot, and to be clothed in a single tunic; and at night she was to sleep on a straw mattress for the space of five hours. After having been thus rapt for some time, prostrate on the ground, with the book of the Gospels in her hand, she rose in vehemence of spirit; and with such brightness of countenance, that she looked like an angel, she stood up, and took off her shoes and stockings. She then went to her cell, and arranged her bed with the straw mattress only, taking every thing from her little altar, excepting the crucifix, and the book of the Gospels,

which during all these actions she had retained in her hand. Then leaving the room still in ecstasy, she went to the press in which the tunics of the nuns were kept, and taking that which was the most patched, old, and shabby, she retired to a private room, stripped herself of her clothes, and with great agility and grace dressed herself in the old patched habit. On seeing herself thus meanly clad, she threw herself on the ground, and fixing her eyes on heaven with incredible devotion, recited the whole Te Deum. Then making a bundle of her former clothes, she carried them, still in rapture, to the chamber of the prioress, and having taken pen, ink, and paper from the desk of the chamberlain, she went into the choir, and springing on an altar of the Blessed Virgin, and before the image, (a large statue in relief,) wrote these words, "I, Sister Mary Magdalene, profess and promise to God, to His most pure Virgin Mother Mary, to Saint Catherine of Sienna, to the seraphic St. Francis, and to all the heavenly court, obedience, poverty, and chastity, as God now gives me to understand and know them, with a firm resolution of always observing them in this manner; unless I have clear proof that it is His good pleasure that I should abandon it. Therefore as I now understand how He wishes me to observe this poverty, confiding in His aid and mercy, I make this profession 'in manu puritatis Mariæ.'" She said besides this such beautiful things concerning holy poverty, as to excite in her hearers an ardent desire of attaining it,

and then added, "If I be said to have found a new rule, I can reply that it is no novelty, but a perfect observance of my rule, since all of us must be like this, if not in effect, at least in affection." On coming to herself, she declared to the father-confessor and the mother-prioress, all that God had commanded her to do, and humbly asked leave to observe the injunction, but they, to assure themselves that it was no delusion, wished to try her, and prudently commanded her to go back and put on her shoes and stockings again. She obeyed and did so, but broke out into most bitter lamentation, fearing that she had been deceived, as the father-confessor had not assented to that which had been commanded her by God. On the following morning, however, at communion, the Lord fully consoled her by causing her to see that the father-confessor had done this to try her, and that her ready obedience was pleasing to Him. But it being the will of God that she should execute what He had commanded, He gave her the same intelligence twice during the month of July, and then falling into an ecstasy on the second of August, she with fervour of spirit, again drew off her shoes and stockings, under the inspiration of God, and recollecting in her rapture, that her superiors had commanded the contrary, she uttered these words, "O my God, when I shall be with Thee, I will obey Thee; when with them, I will obey them. Send light down there." On recovering her senses, she was again commanded by the prioress to

wear her shoes and stockings, such being the will of the father-confessor, and again she obeyed, but the moment she put them on, her feet began to swell with such great pain that she could only move about by creeping on her hands and knees. She was allowed to remain in this state for some days, during which they were obliged to put her in the organ loft to hear mass, and to carry her in their arms when she was to communicate. At length, as her pain continued to increase, the superiors clearly saw what was the will of God, and consented that she should follow it. The prioress, therefore, went to find her, and said, "Sister Mary Magdalene, if you know it to be the will of God, the father-confessor gives you leave to take off your shoes and stockings, and to go barefoot in obedience to the Divine Will." She instantly took off her shoes and stockings, and it was truly marvellous that she had no sooner done so than the swelling of her feet subsided, and she began to walk without pain. Her feet resumed their usual shape, and she walked as though she had had no hindrance whatever, and going out of the organ-loft went into the choir, before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, to return her thanks. She continued thus to walk barefoot for three years, in winter and summer; and in cold weather she walked on ice and snow, to perform the work of the monastery, when her feet chapped in such a manner as to bleed, and her flesh, naturally so delicate, through the great cold which she endured by wearing only a single tunic, became

black and livid, and sometimes from the great cold she shivered and trembled to such a degree as to be unable to speak. But if any of the sisters wished to bind up her bleeding feet, she refused, saying, "Let me suffer for my sins." After three years, she resumed her shoes and slippers, but never her stockings, except in her last illness of which she died, and so, till this illness, she was always habited in one old shabby tunic, and constantly slept on the straw mattress.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SHE IS TRIED BY GOD FOR FIVE YEARS WITH MANY TEMPTATIONS.

A TRUE word of Scripture declares that God tries such persons as are dear to Him, purifying and refining them in the fire of temptation, according to the degree of sanctity and perfection to which He designs to raise them. "Because thou wert acceptable to God, it was needful that temptation should try thee," said the angel to Tobias. This truth was verified in this noble and blessed young religious, who being acceptable to God from her tender years, was tried by Him with temptations so horrible, as to astonish all who read or heard of them. For not contented with having in her juniorate reduced her diet to bread and water, and caused her to sleep badly and dress worse, as has already been related, on the 28th of May, 1585, she having at-

tained her twentieth year in the preceding month, and not being yet out of the novitiate; He warned her in rapture, that for her probation He would place her, like another Daniel, in a den of lions; that is, of horrible infernal monsters and temptations, and leave her in their hands; not of tyrants who should give her body to martyrdom, but of demons, who should fight against her soul, and for five years torment her by various snares, insults, and acts of violence, and by interior and exterior temptations.

At this announcement the holy young virgin turned pale and trembled; but the Eternal Father consoled her by the assurance, that she should be victorious over all temptations, and promised her that the Incarnate Word should ever guard her, and that the Virgin Mother and her patron saints, Saints Angelus the Carmelite, Austin, and Catherine of Sienna, should always bring her the food of spiritual consolations.

This was more clearly revealed to her in the great rapture which occurred to her in the year 1585, and which commenced at vesper-time on the vigil of Pentecost, June 8th, and continued for eight successive days, till the morning of Trinity Sunday, in the beginning of which rapture the Eternal Son addressed her in these words, "Know that from the day on which thou dost celebrate on earth that festival on which thou didst so intimately bind thyself to Me, whilst I gave Myself to thee in such fulness (alluding to her profession, made the year before on the feast of the Holy Trinity) thou

hast been united to Me in such a manner that thou shalt be made partaker of the Divine riches. Know further, that for five years I will deprive thee of every feeling of grace, but not of grace itself, which shall ever abide in thee. This privation shall be for the good pleasure of My Father, the joy of the angels, and of all those blessed spirits who wait around the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, for the example of mortals, for the greater torment of the damned, for the confusion of the devils, for the refreshment of the souls in Purgatory, and for thine own consolation. I will, moreover, act towards thee as a valiant chief who repeatedly tries his soldier before he promotes him to high honour; so will I prove thee before I promote thee to the presence of My Father." Having said this, He began to give her various salutary instructions, which she was to follow during the time of probation, and the promise of never forsaking her nor depriving her of the assistance of His grace; to which she humbly replied, "Sufficit mihi gratia tua," and promptly offered herself to suffer that which should be pleasing to the Divine Majesty.

On the first day of this same Feast of Pentecost, He also showed her the devils amongst whom He would place her, as in a den of lions; and at the end of the octave, He told her what were the temptations which they would present to her, of which five would be especial. These were to be temptations to infidelity, despair, pride, gluttony, and offences contrary to purity. She was also shown that the devils

would torment her visibly and invisibly, and rush on her with great violence. On hearing this, she fell on her knees, all pale and trembling, exclaiming, "I ask the aid of heaven and earth, and all their inhabitants," with many other words of great sorrow, and in particular she said, "O my God, where is the sun of thy grace? It seems obscured to me. Thy goodness is all withdrawn from me. I am now abandoned like a body without limbs, which cannot aid itself. I am like a barren trunk." The vision disappeared, and during the whole octave she was united to God in perpetual rapture, in which she was enriched by gifts, strengthened by grace, and armed at all points for the combat. The eight days, however, being ended, at about seven o'clock on the morning of Trinity Sunday, the rapture ceased, and she was left by the Lord in the den above named. She entered it in the year 1585, and remained in it for five years, till 1590, the 25th year of her age.

She now beheld the devils, who, like ferocious lions, rushed upon her with temptations, at which sight she shuddered for fear, uttering most piteous lamentations; and the sense of grace having being withdrawn according to the prediction, she fell into such a state of aridity, that to herself she seemed to be abandoned by God, and said that she no longer knew whether she were a rational creature or not, for she could not raise up her soul in offering to God, so that she seemed to herself to have become a beast. Through this aridity of spirit all the exercises

of the community wearied her, so that she could not attend to the observances in the choir, the refectory, or any where else. The holy nun sighed, mourned, and wept as though she had committed some great fault, saying, "I am become a very sink of iniquity, and the occasion of all evils and of all the offences committed against God, so that sometimes I do not know how Jesus and creatures endure me on the earth." The devil assailed her faith, and tried to persuade her that there was neither a God nor a future life, and that therefore it was useless for her to labour and suffer so much, and this went so far that she could hardly bear to look at images or holy pictures. He told her not to adore the Blessed Sacrament, but to despise It as a vain thing. He also frequently tempted her to blaspheme God and the saints, especially when singing the Divine Office with the other sisters in choir, when she heard horrid blasphemies formed in her ears, so that in sorrow she burst into tears, and turning to her sisters, said, "Entreat of Jesus that through His grace I may not blaspheme instead of praising Him;" which words moved those sisters to tears of compassion, as they saw the heavy affliction of that blessed soul.

Another time the devil tried to persuade her that the gifts which she seemed to have received from God were not realities, but diabolical illusions; that she had lost the grace of God, and that therefore communions and other good works could avail her nothing, but would rather pro-

voke the justice of God to increase her punishment. He also tried to lead her to despair, by suggesting to her that she was reprobate; that for her great sins, God had forsaken her, and that she could never obtain mercy. So violent were these temptations, that she said, they seemed in some measure to have bound her free will, and so to have clouded her mind, that she seemed no longer to have power to make the acts which she desired, nor to avoid what she wished to shun; so that the devil one day having suggested that she should destroy herself with a knife or a rope, she went to the refectory and took a knife, with which the devil hoped that she would strike the blow. She immediately carried it and placed it before an image of the Virgin which is in the choir of the monastery, and then stamped on it, in scorn of the tempter. This not succeeding, the devil would have persuaded her that she would serve God much better, if, for the good of souls, she put off the religious habit and returned to the world. She took the keys of the monastery, and seeming as though she wished to go out, carried them to the foot of a crucifix and there left them. Hardly had she overcome one temptation than she was attacked by another. She was tempted to pride, the enemy trying to excite in her desires of honour and worldly greatness, and representing the religious state to her as mean and abject. Once, when the prioress gave her a command, through the agitation of the devil, it was suggested to her to reply, "I will not obey."

Though she held the vice of gluttory in extreme abhorrence, and had an especial command from God to live only on bread and water, the evil spirit did not fail to tempt her even to this sin, and if she passed through the dispensary or the kitchen, she saw chests and cupboards open before her in which eatables were kept, but never knew how they were opened; at the same time she felt her appetite inclined to the food before her. She told a sister in confidence, that God could not have allowed the devils to afflict her with any temptation more humiliating than this temptation to gluttony, "But," added she, "I must take these sweet and bitter portions. Sweet, as coming from God, and with His permission; bitter in the pain and confusion which they bring to me."

Jesus also permitted that this, His faithful spouse and most chaste virgin, should be flattered by evil spirits, and most fiercely tempted by fifthy representations and apparitions; and she, remembering the conduct of St. Benedict under similar trials, went to the wood-stack, and selecting such branches as were prickly and thorny, strewed them on the ground and rolled on them naked, by which she lacerated her body so much that she quenched the diabolical flame, and her blood which yet remained on those thorns and prickly branches was afterwards shown to the mother-prioress.

Sometimes the mother-prioress would weep for pity at seeing her exposed to such violent temptations and fierce conflicts, and on the saint

asking her why she wept, would reply, "I weep over you." "But," said the saint, "do not you remember that these things were to be, and that by the Divine will I must pass through these temptations? Have you never seen a darkened chamber with a little light in the midst of it? Even such am I. So fierce are these diabolical temptations and illusions, that they cloud all my faculties, and I seem to be in great blindness, only there remains in my heart a minute light of good-will never to displease God." In short, she many times said that she believed there was no temptation which devils could present which she had not experienced in her own person.

CHAPTER XL.

SHE IS IN VARIOUS WAYS AFFLICTED AND TORMENTED BY THE DEVILS.

THE singular virtue and fidelity of this beloved spouse of Christ, was well proved and manifested by these cruel temptations, but God, who had predestined her to the highest degree of sanctity and perfection, and to glory in His presence for all eternity, saw it good to expose her to more severe trial, and therefore placed her in the hands of Satan, to whom He gave permission, not only to tempt her by fraud and deceits, but also to torment her at his pleasure by visible apparitions. Therefore, besides

an almost constant view of devils in her spirit, by which she was greatly afflicted, the same devils often appeared to her in various horrible bodily forms, tormenting and maltreating her. It often happened that when she went to perform some work of charity or religion, especially when she went to communion, she was suddenly thrown with great violence down a long flight of stone steps, without seeing by whom, her whole body being struck. The nuns seeing the fall, thought she must be dashed in pieces, but on running to raise her, found that she had sustained no injury, and on being questioned by the prioress as to the cause of her fall, she said the devil had pushed her. Being accustomed to communicate every morning, on approaching the wicket to receive the most holy Sacrament, she was seen many times to draw back in great terror, and on being asked the reason, said that over the wicket there stood a devil with a sword, threatening to kill her if she went to communicate, and many times the mother-prioress and the father-confessor were obliged to urge her on and encourage her not to fear.

So great was the hatred borne towards her by the devils, that had not God restrained them, they would have killed her and torn out her vitals. For two whole months she every day for two or three hours endured severe bodily pain. Her face became pale as ashes, and she was reduced to such extremity as to be ready to expire; and all this through the work of the devils, by whom she seemed to be rent in pieces, so greatly was

she tormented. Once, whilst she was praying, the devil appeared to her in so horrible a form, that her face became livid through terror, and she was covered with moisture. She called to her aid St. Michael the archangel, and then said, "O Word, O Word, 'in te Domini speravi, non confundar in æternum,'" and sighed. Then turning to the devil she said, "What wouldst thou have of me, thou horrid beast? 'O bone Jesu.' I seem to taste of hell whilst beholding my adversaries and the sins (committed against Thee.) If ye swallow me up, ye devils, ye will soon be constrained to cast me forth." She was then thrown on the ground and beaten with indescribable fury. Now she struck her head, now rising she again fell, and was so much bruised that they were obliged to apply plaisters. At last, taking courage, she said, "O hideous beast, when thou shalt have tormented me to thy heart's content, what wilt thou have gained? 'Benedicam Dominum in omni tempore, semper laus ejus in ore meo.'" Then standing up and leaning against an altar, she was again dashed to the ground, and had recourse to the Divine assistance, saying, "Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici ejus;" then turning to the devils, she said, "You can only do what my Spouse permits. No, horrid beast, I do not deny that thou art strong and I am weak, but my Lord is near me, who is infinitely stronger and mightier than thou. Ignorant and foolish ones, see ye not that I am with my Jesus, and that ye cannot harm me? Do ye not yet perceive that all your attacks will only

make me a more glorious conqueror?" A little time after she chased away the evil spirits with a discipline. Seeing herself surrounded by them, she threw herself on the ground, and with the same discipline struck now on the right hand and now on the left, with wonderful agility and quickness. Then walking through the oratory in which she was, she struck the walls and benches; and as she sometimes saw many of these evil spirits concealed in the choir, in the place where the nuns communicate and hear the word of God, in the work-room, and in the refectory, and in other places of the monastery, to tempt the nuns, (excepting in the chapter-room, where they could not enter on account of the penances, acts of humiliation, and mortifications practised there.) She took a cross in her hand, and running here and there, struck those places with the discipline, and on being asked why she had done so, replied, "Did you not see? The choir and the monastery were full of devils, and I have sent them away."

She often lay on the ground for three or four hours, her whole person being agitated, and her gestures showing that she was struck now on the head, now on the arms, legs, and other parts of her body, whilst her face expressed great suffering, and became discoloured. On being asked what was the matter, she replied, "The devils in visible forms are beating me, and are also biting me like adders, and venomous serpents; so that my limbs seem to be torn piecemeal." Often when alone in a chamber, she had to contend with the devil, and in her conflict cried out

and threw stones at him. "Get away from me, thou beast," she cried, "what dost thou want from me?" And when he attempted to insult and injure her, she shrank back, saying, "Begone! approach me not! Depart, I tell thee, in the name of Jesus, and if I can command, I command thee." Then, kneeling down, she asked help from God, and after a two hours' conflict with this infernal monster, she said, when interrogated by the superior, that the devil in the form of a most terrible beast, had attempted to insult and devour her.

Another time under filthy forms the devils exhibited to her every abomination which man can commit, to the torment and anguish of that virgin soul, and in other ways they sought to surprise her purity of soul and body, threatening her with violence if she resisted their suggestions; but by the good pleasure of God, she was proof against all their attacks, which only served to throw additional lustre on the integrity of her tried virginity.

One evening, being in the apartment of the prioress, she was thrown on the ground with great violence, without seeing how or by whom the blow was given. Her face and throat began to swell, and she coughed as though she were suffocated, saying in a languid and almost inaudible voice, "I am dying! I am suffocated!" A violent perspiration was caused by the torment and distress which she endured, and this conflict lasted for three hours. When she recovered, her countenance expressed so much exhaustion that

they were obliged to nurse her for many days. After this, when she would have rested her body at night, hours and hours were spent in contendin against the furious attacks of the evil spirits. She once lay on a straw mattress, and for five hours was cruelly beaten and maltreated by the devils, during which time she uttered these words, "O my Jesus, where art Thou?" Sometimes when hearing mass in the choir, she was violently thrown down in the presence of all the nuns, and was then cruelly beaten and dragged hither and thither, to the great distress of the nuns, who wept over her whom they were unable to help. This occurred many times and in various places, and though the holy virgin grew pale, and gave signs of suffering in these torments, yet she never lost her own peculiar grace and gentleness, neither did she ever exhibit unbecoming or distracted gestures, nor rolling eyes, but was quiet and composed, maintaining her wonted modesty, mildness, and gravity, and still more excited the compassion of the nuns, by recommending herself to their prayers; and if in these conflicts any of them wished to assist her, she would say with a peaceful countenance, "Let the devils alone, I know that the Lord will not permit them to try me beyond my strength." She was so constantly engaged in these temptations and conflicts, that she had hardly time to offer herself to God; for when not enduring the bodily presence of the devils, they were always present to her mental vision; so that she once said to a nun in her confidence, who was pitying and

encouraging her, "O sister, judge what must be the effect produced on my soul by this horrible vision of devils."

Often too these devils would howl, shout, and scream in her ears, in such a manner as to prevent her hearing the words of the nuns. Sometimes when going to the choir to recite the Divine Office with the rest, they would, to disturb her, fill her ears with such wicked blasphemies, that she turned weeping to the nuns, saying, "Pray that I may hear the praises of God, and satisfy the obligation of the office."

But as the infernal monsters could not overcome her by violence, they employed wiles and deceits, and not being able to endure her rigorous mode of life, her abstinence of bread and water, her going barefoot, and her mean dress, they one day appeared to her in the guise of two nuns, one habited in white and the other in black, who told her reprovingly that her way of living was not at all acceptable to God, but that it rather offended Him, and that should she persist in her obstinacy, He would disgrace her. She was greatly confounded at this, but having declared all to the prioress, who caused her to pray respecting it, she was assured in rapture on the vigil of Saints Simon and Jude, that this was a diabolical deception, intended to draw her from her life of austerity.

The hatred of the devil did not stop here, but found many ways of defaming and destroying her credit, and of raising scandals against her in the monastery. In particular the infernal ene-

my sought to delude a virtuous, exemplary, and well-intentioned nun, causing ecstasies, raptures, and other extraordinary effects to appear in her, similar to those wrought by God in the saint. This was done that the monastery might be divided, and giving great credit to this new deluded ecstatica, feel less faith in the saint. It cannot be denied that this novelty caused disturbance and raised doubts in the minds of many; but as soon as the diabolical artifice had been detected by religious of experience, the ecstasies and all the singular effects produced by the devil in this deluded one, ceased, and the saint was in higher credit than ever.

Another time the devil assumed her form, and going into the kitchen, took something from the kettle: a nun passing by and seeing this was much scandalized, and the more so, as this happened at the time when Sister Mary Magdalene only took bread and water. She spread the news through the house; but it was afterwards discovered that at that time and hour, the saint had been to communion with the other nuns in the chapter-room. Another time when she was with the others in the novices' oratory making the forty hours' prayer, it was said accidentally that she had been seen to take something in one of the rooms, when a sister who had been with her in the oratory discovered the deception, and they found that it was the devil in her form. Sister Mary Magdalene was aware of all that was said, but never uttered a word in her own defence or justification, excepting that she told

the father-confessor and a nun who was in her confidence, that the devil had done that to defame her and destroy her credit.

But all these assaults and wiles could not cool her ardour in the service of God, nor cause her to commit any thing which might displease Him, which was the effect which the enemy wished to produce. I, for my part, believe that it was a spectacle most acceptable to God, and most lovely and wonderful in the eyes of His angels, to see a noble maiden, weak by nature, barely twenty years of age, and yet a novice in religion, enter for the good pleasure of God and in conformity to His will into a den of infernal lions, who instantly surrounded her in great numbers, and for five succeeding years tormented her day and night with such unremitting fury; and at length to see her issue from it, not only uninjured, but a glorious conqueror. Besides all this, it pleased God, for the greater shame and confusion of these devils, and to manifest her worth more clearly, that in the midst of these trials and during these conflicts, she should be attacked by a high fever, which continued for many days and weeks together, accompanied by acute pains in the head and in the whole system; but in all this suffering, as though she were become superior to pain, she never ceased to perform the usual exercises of the monastery, and even increased her holy prayers, though by her fever and her diet of bread and water, she had become so much debilitated, that she was commanded by the superiors to relax a little of her rigour, and to restore her

strength in some measure by Lenten food, which she did for three weeks in obedience, and then resumed her former manner of life.

CHAPTER XLI.

OF THE ARMS USED BY THE SAINT TO RESIST TEMPTATIONS AND OVERCOME HER ENEMIES.

Having hitherto related the heavy temptations endured by the servant of God in the time of her trial, and the atrocious assaults of the infernal spirits, it will be useful to declare the means by which she resisted and conquered her foes. And first, the blessed God, who in especial love had exposed her to this conflict, to enable her to merit her crown, ever fixed on her the eyes of His divine protection, and during her eight days of rapture fully instructed her in the method of combat, and armed and strengthened her by His grace; wherefore, at the close of this rapture, just as she was about to enter the lists, she, as has been said, uttered these words, "Sufficit mihi gratia tua." Besides this, He revived her from time to time by withdrawing the temptation in some degree, as He did on St. Margaret's Day, July 20th, 1585, being now the fourteenth month of her conflict, when reviving her spirit as she was reciting the divine office in choir, He told her that He would mitigate her sufferings in some degree till October, which He did. He also raised her in her ecstasies to sub-

lime contemplations, in which she gained new vigour by frequently beholding the glory of the saints. She was thus refreshed by hearing of the glory of St. James, her particular advocate. So, on the feast of the angelic doctor St. Thomas of Aquin, being alienated from the perception of external things, and rapt in contemplation of the glory which he enjoys in Paradise, she beheld him encircled by eternal light, whilst her heart and senses were anointed by him with a most sweet and odoriferous fluid, from which she derived greater constancy and strength; and she was warned by the same saint to stand firm, as her aridity of spirit must greatly increase. On the day of the Annunciation, being raised for six hours to the contemplation of that high mystery, the Incarnation of the Word, her soul was incredibly revived. Besides this divine favour she assisted herself in many ways. First, as has been seen, she disencumbered herself of many garments, and as a shield of her virginal purity, only wore an old patched tunic, and this as well in winter as in summer. She went barefoot, walking with naked feet over ice and snow. She only took five hours' repose at night on a straw pallet, and fed daily on bread and water, all which actions were calculated to alarm the devil. She suffered no morning to pass in which she did not refresh herself with the Bread of Angels, though in this she found no enjoyment, being deprived of the sensible perception of this grace. Indeed, in the rapture preceding the morning on which she entered on her probation, she said,

"I am bold to say that now for the first time I shall receive Thee sacramentally without enjoying Thee." She also used a remedy against temptations taught her by the Blessed Virgin, which was to go to the prioress, and earnestly entreat her to lay her under holy obedience never to think of leaving communion or the common exercises of the monastery, and that she should minutely observe the manner of life prescribed to her by God. The prioress, to satisfy her, gave her the obedience, which she humbly accepted, saying, "Benedictus Deus, I will, by the help of Jesus, try to do what you have imposed on me." This action was so acceptable to God, that He afterwards raised her to many raptures of the greatest consolation. When she was tempted to disobey the superiors, she interiorly made contrary acts, as she told the prioress, in these words, "When I say that I will not do what is enjoined, and am attacked by these vehement acts of despair, I make contrary acts in my heart, and renew interiorly the vows of obedience, of religion, and of never offending God." Besides this, she outwardly professed with tears her willingness to die rather than disobey, and in the presence of many sisters the prioress made her promise perpetual obedience, and she readily renewed in her hands the vows of profession.

That such a renewal of vows is an efficacious remedy against temptation, I learnt from the holy virgin herself, at the close of her eight days' rapture; when speaking in ecstasy of this renewal of the strict union made with God in

profession, she uttered these words, which I give at large, as being most useful and consolatory: "This renewal of vows," she said, "is made every time that we renew the promises made, and the beloved soul acquires greater or less union according to her state of perfection, and her interior charity. This interior renewal of vows is pleasing to the Most Holy Trinity, as far as it is the renewal of that interior complacency with which the soul first offered herself to God; the love of the first offer being always renewed with new complacency and affection. It is as grateful to Mary as though she herself renewed her vow of purity. It glorifies the angels, for they behold in it the accomplishment of the inspirations which they have ministered. It exalts the saints, for they see their Creator followed in their footmarks. It gladdens the choir of virgins, who sing a new song when they behold the increase of that which they so fervently practised, and it also increases their glory, for every time that this renewal is made, their festival is, so to speak, celebrated, and the soul herself derives great fruit from it, since in her grace is augmented and former promises confirmed, whilst new peace and union are born in her, the fruit of which is seen in her works and conversation. O how great is the dignity of these vows and promises made to God in holy profession, since their renewal produces such effects, and the soul derives such fruits from it! It is not therefore surprising, O Word, that the enlightened should act as do the order of Thy

most holy Name," (she meant the Jesuits, who renew their vows twice a year,) "and should celebrate this renewal with such solemnity, even as worldlings observe the day on which they were born, or in which they received some dignity. How much more ought we to celebrate with spiritual joy and festivity, the day in which we were united to God by so great a tie, so great that it can never be loosened!" Thus far are the words which she uttered in rapture.

On the vigil of All Saints, 1588, being greatly tempted to disobedience, she went towards the evening into the choir, bound her own eyes, and caused a lay-sister to tie her by a cord to some lattices by the side of our Lady's altar, with her hands behind her. The nuns coming in to say the office, finding her in that situation, were amazed, and the prioress asked who had so bound her, when the saint replied that she had done this because obedience was irksome to her, and she wished that her body should suffer and be bound by cords, since she was unwilling to be held in the sweet bonds of obedience. She then besought the prioress to order all the nuns who passed her as they entered the choir to say to her, "Now, Sister Magdalene, act in your own way." All obeyed, but in doing so, many felt a great compunction of heart, which was expressed in their manner. When all the nuns had taken the obedience, Sister Mary Magdalene, still bound and blindfolded, asked pardon of all with words of profound humility, after which the mother-prioress unbound and released her,

which was no sooner done, than kneeling down, and fixing her eyes on an image of the Blessed Virgin, before whose altar she was, she was rapt in ecstasy, and on coming to herself, declared under obedience, that her act of humiliation had greatly pleased God and confounded the devils, whom she heard howling horribly, they being unable to endure it.

When her chastity was tried, as it was many times by filthy representations, especially in the two first years of her probation, from 1585 to 1587, besides having, as has been said, followed the example of St. Benedict, by throwing herself undressed on thorns, and lacerating her body, on the 8th of September, 1587, she was wont to chastise herself severely with an iron discipline, and she also made herself a girdle of canvass, stuck with iron nails, the mere sight of which made the flesh shudder, and bound it on her bare flesh, and as the mother-prioress on hearing this, forbade her to use either this or any other such severe corporal mortification, without express permission, since her ordinary life was too rigid, she obeyed, and instead had recourse to fervent prayer for the divine assistance, confiding especially in the intercession of the most blessed and pure Virgin Mary. On the 17th of September, 1587, being tormented above measure, she retired into a distant room, and locking herself in, with abundant tears besought the Mother of God to enable her to overcome these suggestions, without prejudice to her virginity. Whilst she thus prayed, this

Queen of Heaven appeared to her, encircled by splendour and glory, and assured her that in all her conflicts which she had in this way sustained, she had never offended the Divine Majesty, but on the contrary, having courageously contended, she had gained a complete victory. She then covered her with a white veil, telling her that for the future she should be free from all temptations which could assail her purity; and so it came to pass, for during the remainder of her life she never after experienced the slightest thought, feeling, or motion contrary to that virtue. So that at the close of her life, she gave thanks to God, saying that she knew of nothing which could affect or stain her purity.

In her temptations to infidelity, she had recourse to God, making interiorly contrary acts, and seeking with greater diligence to perform acts of faith and religion. When tempted to gluttony, she did not consent, and so too when the devil sought to reduce her to despair. Her common remedy was to have recourse to the mother-prioress, Sister Vangelista del Giocondo, a person of great judgment and spirituality, as will hereafter be shown, who had been her mistress in the novitiate, and who had afterwards the constant care of this holy virgin, and in all her temptations she always sought her counsel. But the devil in opposition often caused her to lose her way, so that when she thought herself going to the apartment of the prioress, she found herself in another place. She tried also to go to the chapter-room and there publicly accuse

herself of her faults, and by the way she was annoyed by the horrid blasphemies of the devils, who filled her ears and so distracted her that she could hardly reach the room.

When, under a holy appearance, the enemy would have made her throw off her habit and leave the order, she had recourse to the prioress, and also caused herself to be bound in her room. Another time with a rope round her neck and her hands tied, she asked her in the presence of two sisters, to give her the habit of religion for the love of God. By these acts she remained conqueror, the devil was confounded, and God was glorified. Having by the divine help overcome this temptation, she begged of God, to clothe her internally with the holy habit, and on the 5th of August, 1588, whilst reading the Life of St. James, she in a transport saw the saint, who showed her a most beautiful white habit, which had come forth from the side of Christ; on which she redoubled her prayers to her Spouse, entreating Him through the intercession of St. Albert, her advocate, whose feast was then celebrated, that He would interiorly clothe her with it, and for this end she invoked the aid of her patron saints one by one. She did not pray in vain, for on turning her eyes to the crucifix, she saw issuing from its side a most precious tunic, from the right hand a scapular, from the left a cincture, from the thorn-crowned head a white veil, from the wound on the neck, caused by bearing the cross, a luminous cloak; and interiorly attracted by

this sight, she sprang on the altar on which was the crucifix, and it was seen by her gestures that she was interiorly clothed with the habit, as she afterwards declared. She kissed each of the sacred wounds from whence the habit issued, and when the Queen of Heaven gave her the wreath, the taper, and the crucifix, which are given by the priest at a clothing, she kissed her image, and omitted none of the ceremonies usually performed on taking the habit in that order, excepting that she did not sing the appointed versicles; but she showed that she heard them sung by angels, saying in rapture, "O you sing well! These are other songs than those sung here below!" Being then communicated by Jesus, she sang the Confiteor, going through all the actions of a communicant, and at last, having reached the climax of joy, after having exclaimed, "Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus," with other words, she gave the crucifix to kiss to all nuns who were present, and the rapture ceased. To overcome the temptation to pride, she sought to be despised and mortified, and with great earnestness asked mortifications of the prioress, saying that they assisted her in overcoming temptations. The prioress, therefore, sometimes caused her hands to be tied behind her, and commanded her to ask pardon of all the nuns individually.

Sometimes the same prioress disciplined her with her own hands in the midst of all the nuns, and sometimes caused another to do so. If she were at table, she made her rise and ask of

all the nuns a little bread for the love of God, and when she had received it, she made her eat it on the ground in the middle of the refectory, speaking to her in very mortifying terms. Sometimes she caused her to stretch herself on the ground, whilst all the nuns passed over her. Another time she told her to go under the table and kiss the feet of all the nuns, and once especially, after having been made to perform this act with a coil of rope round her neck, which excited general compassion, she went into the choir before an image of Jesus bearing the cross, and there rapt in ecstasy she was saluted by Jesus Himself in reward for having kissed the feet of the sisters. Another time the prioress tied her to a post in the choir with her hands behind her, and once when so bound, she was rapt in ecstasy, and Jesus showed Himself to her bound to the pillar, telling her that her act of mortification had been very pleasing to Him. The prioress also ordered some of the nuns to use insulting language when they happened to meet her, which they did. She stopped, humbled herself, and kneeling before them, said, "May God reward you," making a sign of submission, and receiving all the mortifications imposed on her with great spiritual joy. Not content with the mortifications which the prioress, at her own request, imposed on her, she invented others for herself, and once in particular, she contemplated the Passion of Christ in ecstasy, and felt such an ardent desire of conformity to His humiliations, that rising from her

knees, she went and prostrated herself at the door of the choir, through which the nuns must pass, and placed herself across, having understood in that rapture that her doing so would be acceptable to God. No nun ventured to pass, but the prioress having given them an obedience to do so they all passed over her.

Besides these mortifications, not only during the three years and eight months she remained in the noviceship after taking the habit, that is, from the 30th of January, 1583, to the 30th of November, 1586, but also in the three succeeding years whilst she continued one of the junior nuns, the prioress, partly to try her contempt of herself, and to keep her low amidst all the raptures and privileges which she enjoyed, and partly to assist her in vanquishing her temptations, whilst her probation lasted, constantly employed her in the kitchen, in the menial offices with the lay-sisters, such as scouring, carrying wood, drawing water, cleaning vegetables, washing dishes, cooking, and the like, as though she had been actually a lay-sister. She performed all these acts of mortification and humiliation, and these humble services, so quietly, and with such modesty and submission, as to move all who saw her to devotion and compunction, and by her example strongly excited others to the acquisition of humility and abnegation of self.

CHAPTER XLII.

AFTER A PROBATION OF FIVE YEARS, SHE, BY THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD, PERFORMS A PENANCE OF FIFTY DAYS, AND IS THEN WITH JOY AND RECOMPENSE DELIVERED FROM THE DEN OF LIONS.

In the last year of the probation of this devoted servant of God, which was the year 1590, on Easter Day, which fell on the 12th of April, in which month she completed her twenty-fourth year, the saint was rapt in ecstasy in the oratory of the novices, and understood it to be the will of God that she should observe another Lent of fifty days till the day of Pentecost, the term of her probation; and she was told that this was to supply all the defects of which she had been guilty during the last five years, ten days being assigned for each year. She therefore fasted during these fifty days on bread and water, never going to bed, though her bed, as has been said, was only a straw pallet, excepting once a week on Sundays. At other times she slept in the oratory of the novices with a cross, a skull, and an hour-glass at her head, and hardly one of these fifty days passed in which she did not chastise herself with an iron discipline for a long time together, besides using many other spiritual exercises and mortifications. On the 10th of June, in the same year, 1590, on the first day of the solemnity of the Holy Ghost, whilst the nuns were singing matins

in the choir, at the commencement of the hymn Te Deum the saint fell into ecstasy, and so continued till the twenty-second hour of the day, (Italian reckoning,) only recovering so far as to hear mass, communicate, and take some food; and during this ecstasy she was brought out from the den of lions by her patron saint; that is, she was delivered from all the attacks and temptations of the devils, as had been foretold her by God five years before; and the sense of grace, which had been withdrawn, was now restored to her. Her countenance became most lovely, and it was clear by the words which she uttered, that she felt the fire of the Holy Spirit, whose festival was then celebrated, and by whose strength all her powers were purified. She repeated many beautiful sentences of Scripture with extreme devotion, particularly these, "Eripuit me de manibus inimicorum meorum, et ipsi confusi sunt. Transivi per ignem et aquam, et eduxisti me in refrigerium." She afterwards saw that the devils had certain papers with which they thought to return to their chief, to show the advantages which they supposed themselves to have gained. "But," said she, "my patrons took and tore them to pieces, for all is purified in the Blood of my God, and where they thought they had the advantage, they have only gained greater torments, since they return without victory." Turning to the prioress and her mistress, she pressed their hands, saying, with exultation, "It came and is gone!" meaning the time of her probation. "Now then, help me to thank and

praise my God." Here she recovered her consciousness, as has been said, but after mass, communion, and a refection of bread and water, she was again in rapture, and saw a great light, in the midst of which were fourteen of her patron saints, two and two, who formed a beautiful procession, and whom she named in the following order: St. Thomas of Aquin and St. Agnes, St. John the Evangelist and St. Mary Magdalene, St. John the Baptist, St. Catherine, virgin and martyr, St. Stephen, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Austin, St. Angelus the Carmelite, St. Michael the Archangel and her Angel-guardian. These saints went to the Eternal Father, from whose bosom they drew precious gifts, with which they were commissioned by Jesus to adorn and reward her for all the sufferings of her five years' probation. Filled with joy, she uttered these words amongst many others, "O, my Lord, it seems to me, as if, so to speak, Thou wert rewarding me for offences committed against Thee, for I seem to myself to have done nothing but offend Thee: but, yes, all is manifest to Thee. But O, my Lord, who would have thought that what I thought to be an offence should not be so, but rather the soul's joy and glory?"

The saints named above now approached and adorned her with those rich gifts which they bore, and she, whilst they arrayed her, contemplated their admirable beauty, turning now to one, now to the other. Afterwards, she showed by her gestures that these saints had various

musical instruments in their hands, which they began to sound in praise of the Lord, who had granted such victory to His spouse; and she felt such great interior delight, that being unable to contain it, she exulted with great joy, and danced with incredible agility. Then, still in rapture, she desired to visit all those places in the monastery in which she had been assailed by the devils, and being arrived at one particular spot where they had greatly tried her, she insulted them, singing, dancing, and saying, "In spite of you, I shall rejoice in the day of the Lord, I shall laugh you to scorn in His presence, and cast myself at His feet." She then knelt down, and rising softly, sang these words, "O ye devils, for your torment, I will rejoice before my God at that which has befallen me, I will wear it as a crown for my head, and humble myself before Him." Again she prostrated herself, and again rose, singing, "O ye monstrous beasts of hell, cry and howl as ye will, my soul will esteem you no more than butterflies, but I will praise my God for His great gifts!" She then went to other places in the same manner, singing these words, and those of St. Paul, "Quis nos separabit à charitate Christi; Tribulatio, an augustia, an fames? Omnia arbitratus sum ut stercora, ut Christum lucrifaciam; Dominus illuminatio mea, et salus mea, quem timebo?" The nuns ran in great numbers to witness this sight, and were affected even to tears at seeing their sister freed from temptations, and withdrawn so gloriously from the hands of the devils.

They looked on her with delight, as on an angel of Paradise; for besides the grace of all her actions, her face had become most beautiful, and her eyes brilliant as stars. Her rapture being ended, she began to converse with all the sisters, humbling herself before them all, and receiving their congratulations, but first thanking God and all of them for the affection which they manifested.

Being again in rapture on the following day, (Monday, the second day of Pentecost,) she was told after communion, that God would confer a great gift on her, which should be the continual interior enjoyment of His presence, as a reward for the horrible vision of devils to which she had so long been exposed; when beholding her Beloved, she joyfully exclaimed, "O my Spouse, for so I will call Thee, the horror arising from that vision of devils is incomparably less than the joy which flows from Thy delightful presence, for Thou art, as says the prophet, 'Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum;' and whereas before, there was no time nor place in which I had not the terrific vision of those malignant spirits; so now, whether walking, standing, labouring, or speaking, I shall ever behold Thee, O my Beloved. And as before the devils presented themselves, not only to the eyes of my mind, but even in bodily forms; so now, Thou wilt not only be present to my mind, but wilt also show Thyself to my eyes, for my joy and consolation." The Lord then asked her in what form she would desire to see Him, and she replied, "In three forms, as Thou wert in Thine infancy, when fly-

ing into Egypt, as Thou wert when Thy mother lost Thee in the Temple, and in that form in which Thou didst suffer." Hardly was her request uttered, when Jesus appeared to her in the two first manners; first, as when He went, a little child, into Egypt, which caused her to exclaim in delight, "O what a marvel, Thou art so little, and yet so great a God; but through Thy littleness I discern Thy greatness! O the greatness and littleness of my God! I shall never be satiated in contemplating Thee, O little and great God, most lovely and attractive!" Immediately afterwards, He showed Himself as at the age of twelve years, with a most lovely and admirable countenance, in which a meek glory shone, whilst she exclaimed, "O my God, thus tender and sweet art Thou to those who enjoy Thee!" She then went to the oratory, and with intense fervour besought our Lady to shed the love of God into the heart of each nun of her monastery. Soon after the ecstasy ceased, but having taken a little food, she was again enraptured, and beheld Jesus as at the age of thirty-three years, when turning to Him, she said, "O my Jesus, I now behold Thee in Thy mature age, and whether acting, praising Thee, or labouring, I shall ever behold Thee at that lovely age in which Thou didst give us Thyself, and undergo Thy most sacred passion." She made many other colloquies with our Lord, passing the greater part of these three days of Pentecost in ecstasy, in which she spoke sublimely of the Divine greatness, whilst many secrets were imparted to her by God.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OF THE VARIOUS OFFICES FILLED BY THIS HOLY JUNIOR, AND OF THE VIRTUES OF HER MISTRESS, MOTHER VANGELISTA DEL GIOCONDO.

The singular prudence, virtue, and goodness of Sister Mary Magdalene were so well known, that she had hardly completed her novitiate when the nuns began to place her in offices, in which she was constantly employed till her death.

On the 30th of September, 1586, being in her twenty-first year, passing from the novitiate to the juniorate, she was made mistress of the externs for three years, together with a nun of longer standing, and filled the office with great diligence, though this was not a constant engagement, as there were not always young persons on trial. In the year 1589, on the 4th of October, she quitted the juniorate, and was made school-mistress in conjunction with Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, who was elected their mistress. It was in the last year of her trial from the devils that the saint was made school-mistress, which employment she accepted with fear, considering the obligation which it imposed on her to rear those young plants whilst under perpetual conflict herself. Still however she accepted it willingly, as she had for her associate Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, who had been her mistress in the novitiate, and whose sanctity

and perfection she highly esteemed; for being by her office obliged to converse with her frequently, she hoped to profit by her religious example. And it did indeed seem as though God had chosen this excellent mother to be the guide and mistress of Sister Mary Magdalene, since by commission of her superiors she had her in charge from the time of her novitiate till that of her death, and she always declared to her whatever God revealed to her in her raptures and ecstasies, nor had the saint a greater comfort in the time of her trial and temptations, than the direction and counsel of this good mother. Sister Vangelista del Giocondo was endowed with many virtues, and was named by the saint the Pelican of the Community, on account of the tender charity and love with which she sought to help and comfort all, and under this very figure of the pelican, who by her own blood seeks to restore life to her young ones, she was many times shown by God to the saint in rapture. Once especially, during the feast of Pentecost, she saw her amongst the others receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and exclaimed, "That pelican receives abundance of this divine fire." Another time, seeing her much caressed and favoured by the Blessed Virgin, she understood that this was on account of some virtues which shone brightly in her, and especially because, whilst most zealous for the honour of God, the preservation of the community, and regular observance, she acted with great simplicity, and was very humble and self-despising. In praise

of her humility the saint used to say, that whether you called Mother Vangelista a saint or a lunatic it would make no difference to her, for she would neither be elated by the praise nor irritated by the censure.

Besides, having great natural prudence and judgment, she was much enlightened by God, and had great spiritual intelligence, so that Father Bernardino Rosignuoli, S. J., who during his office of provincial at Rome visited the college at Florence, told me afterwards, that when with her he believed himself to be conversing with a St. Bernard, so devoted was she, and so intelligent in the things of God. She was, on account of these virtues, six times chosen mistress of the novices, and seven times superioress of the monastery, which offices she filled with great prudence and charity. She lived to the age of ninety-two, and the nuns, officials, and superiors had always recourse to her counsel in their need, though for the last three years she had been confined to her bed by an apoplectic seizure, which affected her speech. We may judge of the esteem in which she was held by the fact, that in her last illness she was visited by their Serene Highnesses of Tuscany, who after her death, as well as many others, visited her body.

As we have said, St. Mary Magdalene joyfully accepted the office of school-mistress to the novices, and her conversation with them was so benign, charitable, and affable, that she appeared to be rather their sister and companion

than their mistress; and she did this, she said, to win them to God by love, for having been created by God in and for love, we are by love most readily brought to yield and subject ourselves to Him. She did not, however, forget to warn them, in proper time and place, to correct their faults and imperfections, and the more so, as she had received from God the gift of frequently discerning the secrets of hearts. She passed three years in this office, giving such rare examples of every virtue, and being so highly useful to the novices, as clearly to show that she had been placed in that office by the inspiration of God.

On the 1st of October, 1592, she was made sacristan, with two others, who had been longer professed, and exercised the office with great devotion, as having charge of holy things immediately belonging to the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. It was at this time that, as has been said before, she made and embroidered the greater part of a rochet in rapture. In the next year, which was the thirtieth of her age, she was on the sixth of October elected mistress of the juniorate, in which office she remained three years, also filling the place of chief extern mistress. With great and effective care she tried to lead on the young nuns committed to her care to religious perfection, proving, enlightening, and causing them to advance in true and solid religious virtues. By the example of her life, by words and actions, she excited them to interior and exterior mortification, chiefly to self-contempt

and the putting down of self-esteem. And this she did according to the inclinations, and, as God showed her, the various wants of each, as we shall soon relate. The three years being ended in which she was mistress of the juniorate, she was, by the unanimous consent of the chapter, elected mistress of the novices on the 2nd of October, 1598, and a new election being made at the end of three years, she was confirmed in the same office, October 4th, 1601, so that she continued mistress of novices for six years, from 1598 to 1604, in which she was elected superior, or subprioress, which was her last office.

CHAPTER XLIV.

OF THE MODE IN WHICH SHE GOVERNED THE JUNIORS AND NOVICES, AND THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH SHE GAVE THEM.

All that is written in this chapter will present the best instruction to every religious mistress charged with the care of junior nuns, or novices. The saint, in the first place, spared no fatigue, and deprived herself of every comfort and convenience to teach her pupils the manner of religious life, and to aid them in the acquisition of perfection. As example and actions have more weight than words, she not only gave them frequent exhortations, but by actions, and the example of her own life, which was the mirror of every virtue, showed them what they

ought to be, and how they should conduct themselves in the monastery. She tenderly loved all in common, and each in particular without partiality. Her love towards them surpassed that of a mother, and she was wont to say, "Your mothers once gave you birth in the world, but with pain I have given you birth a thousand and a thousand times in God, for when I hear of anything that wounds or afflicts you, I feel it more than yourselves." She was always watching over them, she mended their torn clothes, saved them from fatigue, and when any of them were ill, and had need of corporal or spiritual help, she rendered them every possible service, staying with them night and day for their consolation.

She once said to one of her novices who was suffering from a painful illness, "O if I could but remove these pains from you, and take them upon myself, how willingly would I do it! You are sure of doing the will of God, since He sends you this illness, but in wearing hair-shirts, taking disciplines and other penances, I am not so sure of doing it;" and she then sought to impress on her mind the great merit of suffering, saying, "We must suffer here, since we cannot suffer in heaven." She told all her pupils to come freely to her when they had any need, even in the middle of the night, saying that if they wanted her she would pass the whole night with them. Though weak herself, she never spared her body in their service, and when her pupils begged her to go to rest, would reply, "Daughters, if

you want me I will stand till to-morrow morning, for I have confidence in God, that I shall not hurt myself by doing so." Indeed, had she been at prayer she would have left it to afford them consolation. So low was her opinion of herself, that she believed herself to be an impediment to her daughters' proficiency in virtue, and said to them, "O if you had but another mistress, how much greater virtue would you acquire!" When young persons entered the monastery on trial, she looked carefully to see if they were fit for the order, and if they had a true will and vocation, trying them in various ways, and pointing out to them all the regulations of the monastery, and all the difficulties of the order, that they might not afterwards complain of not having known them, nor injure the monastery if they remained. If she found any difficulty, she said to them frankly, "If you are not pleased with our manner of life, you can choose some other convent, for we shall always continue so to live." Though this good mother was most compassionate, yet she was inflexible and severe in all that regarded religious observance, not considering nobility, fortune, nor any interest whatever, but freely speaking her mind. When any one was about to take the religious habit, she began for many days before to recommend her to the prayers of the others, directing her own communions and penances to the intention of obtaining for her a full and deep perception of the dignity of the state of holy religion. On the night pre-

ceding the clothing she never went to bed, but spent the hours in prayer for the postulant, and this being well known to the novices, they on such nights often laid various articles on her bed in the certainty that it would not be occupied by herself. She was afterwards unwearied in impressing on the minds of the novices the love of religion, and with sweetness and tenderness sought to attach them to all the rules and customs of the monastery. "These children," she would say, "come from the world. They leave father and mother with all the comforts of secular life; it is therefore necessary that they should find persons who by love will induce them to embrace with good-will the labours of religious life." "Daughters," said she, "you have left one mother, and have found many; you have left a few sisters, and have found a great number, who will love you differently from your relatives, for they will love you in God, which love far surpasses natural affection." She tried to attach them to herself, pitied, caressed them, and condescended to them for the first months, that they might forget the world and their father's house, and become attached to the community. She desired that they should take all permitted recreations with cheerfulness, and contrived that they should not be disturbed in them; she wished the novices to be very grateful to all the mothers and sisters, as having by their means received the most precious gift next to baptism which God can bestow on His beloved in this life, that is, an entrance into holy religion.

"You," said she, "are in gratitude obliged to love and esteem all, regarding yourselves as unworthy of their society." She further wished that the novices should love all in the Lord, as though they had been born of one father and mother; that there should be no distinction between them, but that they should regard each other as the daughters of the Eternal Father, the spouses of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, and sisters of the angels. If they met by accident she wished them to rejoice as though they saw each other for the first time, and mutually to salute each other with words which should excite them to the love of God. When together in the novitiate, as in other places, they were to look upon themselves as in a choir of angels represented by the virginity and purity of their sisters.

Hardly a day passed in which she did not say to them, as St. John the apostle to his disciples, "Daughters, love one another, for this is the commandment of Jesus;" adding, "if you desire one degree of grace for yourselves, ask of God two or three for your sisters and companions, considering them as better disposed to receive it than yourselves. In this way you will be disposed to receive those graces, and purify your souls from all self-interest and self-esteem. Nevertheless, you should ever aspire to the highest possible perfection." That they might attain to this, she added, "Daughters, if you wish to gain great perfection in a short time, take the crucified One as your Master. Let

your ears be attentive to His words, for He continually speaks to your heart, and particularly when you have received Him in the most holy Communion. Addict yourselves to prayer, for from commerce with God in prayer, a person comes to regard nothing but God. Let God suffice you, care not for your relations, nor for anything earthly, for I assure you that in Him you will find all good, and the complete satisfaction of your desires. Open your heart and your secret thoughts to Him, and you will not be deceived by the enemy." She was anxious that the novices should delight in reciting the divine office in choir in a becoming manner, this being one of the principal obligations of nuns by which they acknowledge, honour, and adore the Divine Majesty. Sometimes, before going into choir, she called her novices to her, saying, "Daughters, consider that till now you have been performing human exercises, and conversing with creatures; now you have to perform angelical exercises, and converse with God Himself, and so important is this work, that the blessed spirits themselves, whose purity is admirable, with fear and trembling hardly dare to perform it. How much greater fear then should we feel who are creatures most unworthy to appear in the Divine Presence!"

She wished that before beginning the office, they should make an act of humility, esteeming themselves unworthy to perform the exercise of angels, teaching them to offer their praises in union with those which the blessed spirits

present to God in the heavenly country; because though it is impossible that our prayers can attain the purity of those presented to God by the holy angels, we are not forbidden to desire to honour God in this sublime manner. This recital of the Divine Office in choir with the rest was the devotion which she preferred to all others, whether prayers or meditation in private; and if any one asked her permission to leave the choir for private mental prayer, she replied, "Daughter, in giving such a permission, I should deceive you, for whilst you supposed yourself to be giving more glory to God, and to be more pleasing to Him, by your prayer or private devotion, you would really have merited little, since every other prayer is of little merit with God, in comparison of the Divine Office recited with the other nuns." She carefully observed how the nuns attended in choir, how they chanted, if they were composed, if they kept their eyes cast down, and such like things. Once in choir she made two or three signs to a novice to go out, and as she did not move, at last called her aloud in the presence of the others, and sent her away. She did this because she was not attending to the office, and also because she saw a devil singing and dancing in the choir on account of her distractions and disobedience to the signal of her mistress, and she would not be overcome by him. Another time she for a trial called another, saying, "Do you think yourself worthy to stand here chanting with these servants of God?" and sent her away. Afterwards she

asked her what were her thoughts on the command given her. She taught the novices to perform their works, great and small, internal and external, with the pure intention of pleasing God and glorifying His Divine Majesty, saying, "She who thus performs her actions and regulates all her words and movements, even to the twinkling of an eye, seems to say, 'After death I hope to enter heaven without seeing Purgatory.'" She always contended for this purity of intention in working, and often suddenly asked now one and now another, "What was your intention in doing that? Now what was your intention in that work?" and if she saw that the work had been casually performed, she would say, "Do you not see that you lose merit in this work? God does not feed on works performed at random." When she saw any one acting coldly and without fervour, she would say that such souls had need to be carried by religion, and did not carry religion in themselves; and that their works might be acceptable to God, she exhorted them to unite them to those which Jesus performed when on earth, saying, "Our good works are in themselves like so much lead, but united to those of Jesus Christ, they become perfect gold." She also highly valued the fixing the heart in God, often asking, "Where is your heart now? Of what are you thinking now? How many times have you thanked God to-day, who has called you into religion, and given you Himself in the most holy Sacrament? What did Jesus say to your heart when you received Him?" She ordered

one to come every day and tell her how many times a day she thought of God, and another to tell her what was her first thought on awaking in the morning.

By these means she accustomed them to keep the heart occupied with God, to attend to the inward voice of God, to have God continually present, to hold an interior commerce with God, and to keep their hearts unveiled, and she said that from her tender years she had experienced great advantage from the use of these means. All rational creatures she called souls, (anime,) and often used this name. She said that God demands an absolute death in His creatures, and that without this nothing is done, and that whosoever enters into the service of God, does nothing else but put himself to death by a thousand ways and means, every hour, and every moment, and this she proved in this manner. The life of our flesh is joy, pleasure, and sensuality. The death of the flesh, is the privation of all its enjoyment and pleasure, and the subjugation of sensuality, by fasts, vigils, and other austerities. The life of the judgment and free-will is to dispose of itself, and everything else in its own way; its death is always to submit it to the opinion and will of others by means of obedience. So also pride and the desire of reputation are put to death by continual acts of true humility and self-contempt, by concealing ourselves in order to be unknown. Whoever would truly serve God, must so put herself to death, and she deceives herself who thinks to do this

with the milk and honey of internal and external sweetness in her mouth; for it cannot be without great pain, that we shall die to ourselves, that God may live in us. She also said that she did not deserve to be called a servant of God, who does not suffer and labour in this service, and that she deceives herself, who goes to the service of God for the sake of consolations and enjoyments, since God is not really found in enjoyments, but in true virtue, which has its proper place in abstinence, suffering, and labour, and that those spiritual sweetnesses are alone to be esteemed, which invigorate the soul for labour and voluntary sufferings, through the desire of honouring God and fulfilling His will.

She never had much opinion of those persons who having all their lives sailed on a sea of sweetness, appeared there to have attained their perfection; for she declared that to be no true virtue which was untried by its opposite, and by trials and temptations, coming either from God, man, or evil spirits, so that when she saw a novice always quiet and without difficulties, she was never satisfied, but said, "I fear you have made exterior convenience your end, and not attended to your interior. Her great light, which enabled her to read the very heart, disclosed to her the dispositions and inclinations of her daughters, whom she guided with supernatural and superhuman prudence, accomodating herself to the capabilities of each. She imposed most on those most capable of endurance, and what was most amazing, her mode of in-

struction varied as much as the characters of those whom she directed. Her's was the tact which could knock at the heart and enter into the secret inclinations of each, drawing all to perfection, and grounding them in solid virtue, according to the natural bent of their minds.

By a single look she attracted hearts, aroused, enlightened, and effectually encouraged them to good works. At one and the same time she would look on one severely, making her blush and cast down her eyes; and turning to another, she would contemplate her with such a glad and happy countenance as would revive her, however sad and faint-hearted she might be. One she would reprove with severe and piercing words for the smallest fault, whilst she would tolerate or gently reprove the same or much more serious faults in another. With some she dissembled, as though she did not see their faults; with some she was silent, avoiding conversation for a time, and adopted many other methods, having this especial grace, that she provoked anger in no one; but on the contrary, all acknowledged that her mode of proceeding had been profitable to them. She tried to cast down self-esteem and a regard for their own reputation in her daughters, and to ground them in true humility; and therefore exercised them in various mortifications, public and private, and by two words she could make any one of them enter into herself and detect her own imperfections and faults, as may be gathered from the following examples.

She sometimes called a novice from amongst

the others, saying, "This child thinks we have had great luck in having her in our monastery, but I say that she has had great luck in our admitting her into our number." If she saw any one self-complacent or imagining that she had done something well, she would in that light of God which penetrated the heart, instantly expose a thousand imperfections in that work, so that she who before was vain-glorious and satisfied, was afterwards ashamed of having done it. If some were endowed with greater knowledge, sense, natural talents, or virtues, than others, to keep them humble, and secure them from human complacency, she employed them but little, and studiously seemed to make but small account of them, and to esteem them less than the rest. She humbled them in their actions, and did this in such a way, that it could never enter their heads that this was done for their humiliation; since she clearly proved to them that their actions were imperfect and worthy of blame, and so acute were her reasonings, that they opened the intellect, and gave the mind light to discern the faults she pointed out. And when she was obliged to employ them in anything calculated to display their talents and knowledge, by the light which she possessed she managed the matter so well and skilfully, that they derived humiliation from the preference, rather than human complacency. It was an especial grace bestowed by God on this holy mother that she was enabled to exercise her daughters in acts of virtue in a way concealed from themselves.

She once made two novices of eighteen or twenty, publicly read the Alphabet, to put down their conceit and mortify them. She also imposed various penances, mortifications, and menial exercises on the juniors and novices, which were to be performed in the refectory. Once she told one of them to go into the refectory with her scapular only. Before another took the habit, she was to sweep the refectory in her silk dress, to kiss the feet of the nuns, and to be there publicly reproved in terms calculated to make her think that she was supposed to be insane. To humble one who was disposed to pride, she ordered the novices to expose every fault which they remarked in her, and employed her in the most abject offices.

A noble young lady, nineteen years of age, of great virtue and talents, having entered the monastery on trial, said in her presumption, "I wish to be a nun in reality, and not in name and words." The good mother dissembled at the time, and did not reprove her; but afterwards hearing on another occasion, that she had said in the presence of others, that she should not like to conform to certain ceremonies used in clothing the novices, the saint did not think it right to pass this over in silence, but reproved her and showed her from what spirit this proceeded, many times repeating these words, "These are the people whom the world thinks so sensible and enlightened!" at the same time giving her a look of such majesty as to cause her to feel deep compunction. Some who were present

would have excused her, but the saint would admit of no excuse, but calling her aside, with much charity, enlightened her on her error and on true humility. She then told her to ask pardon of all the novices, and whenever she committed any fault, the good mother never failed to remind her of her words. Before this, some young lady took the habit; she once said that she had had some hesitation in choosing that monastery, because great penances were not performed there, nor was there great opportunity of suffering for God. The holy mother instantly marked the presumption, and to eradicate it from the heart of the novice, began to treat her with severity. Sometimes she called her suddenly and gave her a discipline; reproved her for the least unreasonable word; caused the other novices to reprove her without mentioning the order of the mistress, with other similar humiliations, and when she sometimes wept under these mortifications, her mistress would say, "Sister, remember that you had a difficulty in choosing this house, because we do not perform great penances;" and she continued to do this, till she had brought her to the knowledge of her presumption. Often, however, did she console her by saying, "Sister, one who desires to be built up for God, must first demolish themselves;" and one of her words gave her so much comfort as to banish her melancholy.

Once, for the space of two or three months, she appeared to be so much annoyed by this novice, as to be hardly able to endure her, so that at length the latter broke out into great lamenta-

tions, when the saint comforted and quieted her by the assurance that it was the will of God, and for her advantage that she should treat her thus. Those who were more simple, and had less knowledge, she encouraged, appearing to esteem them more, knowing that to them such conduct would be a means of instruction. She not only mortified her daughters in their reputation, but also in what related to their private judgment and inclinations. When one of them was in choir, she called her saying, "Go and count how many bricks there are in the pavement of the novitiate;" and to another, "Go and count the boards of the floor." One she sent to the well to draw water and throw it back again; to another she said, "Go into the garden and catch ants." She afterwards inquired what had been their thoughts in performing these acts, and what they had drawn from them. If she saw one much disposed for prayer, she would at prayer time send her to sleep, to draw water, or to perform some different exercise, that she might learn to submit her self-will, and bring her private judgment into captivity. From such as were inclined to exterior exercises, she removed the opportunities of performing them, commanding them to pray or to perform some exterior devotion. She told one novice to go every day into the garden, and try to learn something from the plants and herbs, and to keep an account of their instructions. She took the obedience, and so great was its fruit, and so lovely the lessons which she drew from it, that she afterwards felt it hard to discontinue the practice.

CHAPTER XLV.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

The saint gave the penances which we have named, and also her reproofs, with such great charity, that they excited in the novices an increased love and reverence for her; so that those reproved would say, "This is indeed a mother to me," and they would have walked on thorns to have listened to her instructions, which enlightened, warmed, and confirmed the soul, as though they had been imparted by a celestial spirit. Indeed, there shone something so divine in her eyes, as to give them great consolation, even under the reproof. In reproving she exhibited great majesty, which infused a holy fear into the heart, and she could at the same moment appear severe yet amiable, majestic yet humble. Her charity and benignity might have been read in her countenance, and the spirit of humility with which she uttered her words, showed that in reproving she interiorly trembled; she never gave a mortification without having previously tried it on herself, nor any command without having first consulted her crucifix. She would sometimes see a fault without immediately reproving the offender, but sometimes waited till the novice had gone to bed, and then ordered her to be called and reproved her for daring to go to bed without having previ-

ously humbled herself, and so cleared herself of the fault. She never reproved any whilst their passion lasted, but after it had passed and the mind was calmed. If any one replied in irritation, she looked at her with a fixed but kind and benignant eye, and without saying anything; then waited for a fitting time to correct her. A novice had been for some months in irritation of mind, and had taken an aversion from the holy mother, who let her alone, but at last made her see her error, saying, "You need me, and I you, for God has given me to you," and so she quieted her. She never reproved any one without first examining if the fault were in herself, and always considered herself to be inferior in virtue to the person reproved, and many times after having given a reproof, she went to the prioress to humble herself and accuse herself of a fault in reproving, saying that she was more imperfect than the sister whom she had reproved, but that she had done it in charity and under the obligation of her office, begging the prioress to forgive her if she thought her wrong, and to give her a penance. When she had warned her novices of any fault, she wished them to go to her every evening, and tell her how many times they had committed it during the day; and sometimes when one came to her all ashamed of having so many times fallen, she would say, "Go away, I will not waste time on you, who do not profit by my warnings." Then, when she was not thinking of it, she would have her called, and make her tell these faults of which she would not at first

hear, and then the thoughts which had passed through her mind on being sent away. Once she allowed a novice whom she had thus dismissed to go to bed, and then made her get up to perform this penance. One evening, a novice having gone to rest, the holy mother went to her bedside, and having reproved her, made her rise and sent her to the oratory, where after a second reproof, she told her to pass the night there, and to sleep on the ground. She then left her, and after she had been there some time, she went and asked her if this treatment had grieved her, and what she had thought of it. After the novice had told her everything, she with great love and charity told her that in religion we must accustom ourselves to have great faith in obedience, and not to take superfluous care of our bodies.

If any of the novices were melancholy, she said, "You have not the love of God. Why are you thus? You would do better in thinking of the salvation of some soul, and going to snatch it from the claws of the devil and win it to God." And then she would teach her some prayer suited to this intention, such as an offering of the blood of Christ for that soul, or any similar devotion, saying, "Ask with faith, and God will give you that soul." She maintained, that one reason why God had separated them from the world, was that they might be assistants of Holy Church in the conversion of sinners. "O ye novices," she would say, "could you but see the beauty of a soul in the grace of God, you would be so

much enamoured of it, that you would do nothing else but ask souls of God; and, on the contrary, could a soul in mortal sin be placed before your eyes, you would do nothing else but weep, and you would hate sin more than the devil himself, and always pray for the conversion of sinners." As at a profession she generally went into ecstasy, and beheld the beauty of the sister's soul, her zeal and desire of gaining souls were so strongly excited by the perception, as to lead her earnestly to endeavour to excite the same in her daughters and subjects.

The time which she chose for giving warnings and corrections, was when the novices had just come from prayer, or other exercises of devotion. She then called them and admonished them of their faults, and if either of them being new and unmortified, was disturbed by the admonition, she would say, "Know, my daughter, that when you come from prayer you should be ready to receive mortifications and reproofs, whether right or wrong, and be so firmly fixed in God, that nothing should disturb the peace of your soul: this will be the fruit of prayer." This too was her time for public mortifications, as taking the discipline, and the like, in the presence of others, and she would say to them, "Lament, and regard that day as lost in which you have not in some way mortified yourselves for the love of God." She greatly valued mortifications, and would not always grant them when requested, saying, "You are not worthy to take them." If any one desired a great penance

and great mortifications, she would say, "Repeat a Pater and an Ave Maria;" whilst with the tepid she would use violence to rouse them. Sometimes she would give a penance, and then a little before the time for performing it, would prevent it and not allow it to be done.

She exercised her daughters in obedience, wishing them to obey cheerfully and with a glad countenance, not as obeying creatures, but the blessed God, since they had not given their wills to creatures, but to Jesus. She commanded them not to do the slightest thing without her permission, or if they could not find her, without the permission of another novice, whom she named to them; and sometimes they were required to ask the permission of any novice who might be present, that nothing might be done but in the exercise of obedience. One who had great repugnance in obeying, by doing violence to herself in asking permission in the slightest things, accustomed herself to obey easily in things of obligation. She told them that they should obey the superiors given them even though they were but lay-sisters, and bring their judgment into captivity in all things opposed to it, believing that what was commanded was the will of God. "Till you give yourselves as dead into the hands of obedience," said she, "you cannot truly know what the will of God is. Offer to God your will in sacrifice, and you will find complete content. If you desire to fulfil the Divine Will, never seek by persuasion to bend the will of your superior to your own, but execute her will simply, and

by this means you will arrive at great perfection. If you feel a repugnance in breaking down your will, you show little love to God, since in a matter in which you can supremely honour Him, you are unwilling to exert yourself for the love of Him."

A young lady who was quite unknown to the saint entered the monastery on trial. On the first day the holy mother began to treat her with great charity and familiarity, as though they had been brought up together, so that she was, as it were, bound to her. On the second day she discovered some thoughts in the young person's heart, and gave her some good counsels respecting them, which caused her to believe that she had found an angel-guardian; so that she showed her all her interior, and rejoiced to be under her care. One morning the young lady rose earlier than usual, and earnestly begged to go to matins with the nuns. The mother replied, that she would go and ask leave of the prioress. She went, and returning, said, "I have obtained permission, but go to bed again." The young girl obeyed, and when she was in bed the saint said, "I have been trying your obedience; now put on your clothes and come into the choir with us."

When a novice obstinately refused any mortification or penance imposed on her, the good mother began to perform it for her in the presence of the rest, that she might be confounded and humbled; and if this were not enough, she would herself kneel before some novice, beseeching her to tell her what could be done to help

that soul; and she did this in a manner which would have melted the very stones, and never ceased till she had made her yield and enter into herself, even though she spent whole nights in trying to soften her.

She once saw that the stubborn obstinacy of one of the novices arose from diabolical temptation, and her zeal being inflamed, she took a discipline in her hand, and with great force began to beat this novice, saying, "I wish to see who has most power, God or the devil, who has seized on the heart of this sister, and I shall go on till I see who has the greater power." She continued to beat her for a long time, till at last the heart of the novice was softened and subdued, so that with great humility she asked pardon of the good mother and of another person who was present, and so overcame the tempter. She used to say, "Daughters, the devil assails you with temptations because you are under my care, for he hates me so much, as always to try to spite me, and what he cannot get from me, he tries to obtain from you." It was, however, true that they got rid of their temptations by merely being in her presence or staying near her. To two faults she was always rigorous and implacable, and infallibly imposed severe penance on the offender. One was the use of the expressions, "I will," or "I will not," by a novice; the other was detraction, though it related even to the smallest fault in another, and she always recommended them to speak little of their neighbours, even in com-

mendation. "For," said she, "we begin by speaking good, and end by speaking evil of our neighbour." She reminded them when speaking of others to say nothing in their absence which they would not say in their presence, and said that had she known a person who during her whole life had never spoken ill of her neighbour, she should have thought her worthy of canonization before death. When a novice had been guilty of detraction, however slight, she did not usually permit her to enter the oratory that evening till she had called her to give her a penance, which was usually this: she ordered her to acknowledge her fault in the presence of all the novices, and then if the fault were light, to make a cross on the ground with her tongue, but if it were more serious, she made her prostrate herself on the ground and ordered all the others to tread on her mouth, or else to give it three strokes of the discipline. They had the same penance for saying, "I will," and "I will not," so that every one was careful, and these vices might be said to be banished from the novitiate. She did not like persons who were only good for themselves, and used to say, "Whoever is good only for themselves, is neither good for themselves nor for others." She greatly delighted in such as could impart the good which they possessed, and said, "If the graces given you by God are unfruitful, it may be that you may make them fruitful by imparting them to others." One day some novices wished to perform a little devo-

tion among themselves, and another girl who was aware of this, desired to join them, but they would not admit her. The good mother knew this, and gave them a severe reprimand, telling them that this was self-love, not devotion, since they would not extend their charity to their neighbour, and she gave them besides a sharp penance.

She would not allow her novices to attach themselves to anything whatever, but would have them examine every month, whether they had a particular attachment to anything, and if they detected it, they were at once to give up that thing. "For," said she, "all that a religious wants in this life will be restored to her with great interest in another."

One of the novices being much attached to a little book of spiritual exercises, which she had transcribed for herself, she ordered her to throw it into the fire. She made them exchange their habits and other things with each other, to prevent their attaching themselves to them. She took away a chaplet from one who was attached to it, and restored it to her after two months, ordering her, however, to bring it to her every evening, and she continued to do this till she was completely detached, and had learned to use things without appropriation, as religion required her to do. She kept the novices constantly employed, and would have them examine their consciences three times a day, go to her and disclose their faults once, and ask each other's pardon twice, the first time for

having given bad example, the second for the little love felt for others. If any novice were subject to daily temptations, she would speak with her alone, and if necessary, detain her with herself the whole night. She sometimes called up one or the other of the novices, to pray with her in the night, to accustom her to fervour and love of God, or to console her if afflicted.

She every morning gave the points on which they were to meditate during the day; and if any of them knew not how to meditate, to teach and accustom her to the exercise, she would herself make the meditation audibly, and in doing this, she was sometimes rapt in ecstasy, when she uttered most beautiful things on the different points. She called Thursday the day of Love, on account of the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and Friday the day of the Espousals, because on that day Christ espoused the Church and our souls, and on such days she would ask her daughters, "Have you considered what Jesus did for you on this day?"

She wished them when at the grate with their relations, to occupy their minds with God, and taught them how to do so. She was always an exact observer of the silence prescribed by the rule, and wished it to be strictly observed by the others, declaring that a religious who did not delight in silence, could not possibly enjoy the things of God. If a novice spoke in silence-time, besides the severe penance which she imposed, she herself observed silence with that novice, at a time when she might have

spoken, saying, "I wish the rule to have its due." She said that in the time of silence, it was well to consider the works which Jesus wrought in silence from His twelfth to His thirtieth year. She also said that works performed in silence were very pleasing to God, that is, such works as are not evident to the eyes of others, and that it is more safe to perform great works which appear small, than those which are externally great.

When the principal solemnities and festivals occurred, she was observed to be remarkably animated, and to be most recollected in speech, to pray more, and to increase her penances, inciting her daughters by her example to do the same, and for eight or ten days previous to the festival, she wished them to prepare themselves by an hour's additional prayer. When her novices were near the time of their profession, she for many days, and even weeks beforehand, instructed them in the importance and dignity of the vows, disposing them to make this great offering to God in the right way, and once in particular having instructed three who were about to be professed together, she thought that she had not fully explained to them the advantage which the soul derives from the observance of the three vows, and on the evening before the profession, with profound humility, knelt before them and asked their pardon for not having given them all the light and help which she was bound to afford them. Many other things might here be said respecting the method employed by

the holy mother in governing the junior nuns and novices whilst she was their mistress, but these will be inserted in the following chapters, in which we shall speak of her virtues.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OF HER GREAT ESTEEM FOR RELIGION AND THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

St. Mary Magdalene always highly esteemed religion and the religious state, and was wont to call religion "the apple of God's eye, the paradise of delights, the terrestrial paradise." Sometimes she compared it to the heavenly country, speaking of it with elevated sentiments and great fervour, as well in rapture as out of it. She was often heard to say that not only did she not envy any king or earthly sovereign, but that she was even unenvious of the angels and seraphim of Paradise. "For," said she, "the religious state professes to imitate the Humanity of the Word, by the observance of the three vows, which imitation is not granted to kings, or to the angels and seraphim." She represented God to herself in all religious persons. She honoured priests, calling them Christs, and nuns she called spouses of the Word. In speaking of religion, or hearing others speak of it, she was often rapt in ecstasy, receiving many most beautiful intelligences on the subject, and by lovely illustrations showing the nuns the per-

fection and dignity of their state, and instructing them how to perform its duties perfectly. She would have no young persons admitted into the community who were not moved by the Spirit of God to become religious. She highly esteemed the blessing of religious vocation, saying, that after baptism, this was one of the highest graces which God could bestow on a soul. She exhorted all to love religion as a dear mother, "Which," said she, "you do when you obey all that she commands in her rules and constitutions, however trifling it may be, because ordained by the Holy Ghost." She repeated this so often to her daughters, that some were tired of hearing her, and on being asked why she did so, she replied, "Because a precious jewel avails us little if we are ignorant of its value, since what is unknown is neither loved nor esteemed."

"You," she would say, "are called to serve God; to serve whom is to reign, and to begin to do that on earth which you will eternally do in heaven, that is, constantly to praise Him." She exulted when she heard that any one wished to become a religious, especially if they chose a strictly regular house. And this joy arose from the great light and knowledge which God had given her, concerning the dignity of this state. Sometimes, when speaking of the rule to her novices, she would say, "Daughters, love my rule, love my rule;" and on being asked why she called it her's, she said, "Because God has given it me, and desires that I should guard and preserve it; and I therefore desire that it should

appear fair and immaculate in the presence of God." And sometimes she fell into such transports of love, that she would praise the very walls of the monastery, which at that time were old, saying, "Though they are dilapidated, yet how good and dear they are!" She loved them because they separated her from the world, and allowed her to see nothing which could divert her thoughts from God. She said that the reason why some perceived no sweetness in the yoke of religion, was their negligence in its exercises. She told one that it was good frequently to use the words of David, "Elegi abjectus esse in domo Dei mei, magis quam habitare in tabernaculis peccatorum." The nuns being called to carry wood, she said to one of them, "Think that you bear the cross with Jesus;" and so sweet and penetrating were her words, that they made all labour light.

She desired that simplicity should be preserved in all things relating to the house, and one of the nuns having made some little figures and ornamented them too much, she reproved her, and would not let them go from the monastery, that they might not be seen. One of the sisters made some articles for the sacristy which appeared to be less simple than usual, and the saint, in an ecstasy, tore them to pieces.

She was most vigilant lest the customs of the house should be infringed in food or clothing, and lest there should be any levity under the religious habit. The monastery being then very poor, the food was coarse, gross, and unwhole-

some. One of the novices was surprised that the nuns whilst eating such food, should have sufficient strength for their many labours, but on her expressing her surprise to the blessed mother, the latter replied, "These provisions are consecrated by religion, and God imparts to them a virtue which nourishes us as though they were good, and when He wills it to be otherwise, He will provide for us," which prediction was afterwards verified. She could not bear to hear anything in the house found fault with, however simple or mean it might be; whether it were clothes, food, apartments, or anything else; but, on the contrary, would say, "The meaner such things are, the more we should esteem and seek them, for we have made profession of poverty, and the poor prize everything, knowing that rich and valuable things do not belong to them." This rule she observed most perfectly in her own case, highly prizing whatever was abject and mean, and greatly valuing the least thing given her by the community. If any of the sisters were sick, she did not like them to attribute their illness to the strictness and exercises of the community, but wished them to receive it as coming from the hand of God. When any of them were prevented by weakness or any other cause from performing any exercise prescribed by the rule, or any obligation of the community, she would not have them say, "I cannot," but, "For my sins, I do not deserve the ability to do such a thing;" and she would say the same under any impediment which occurred to herself.

She wished them never to appear burthened or encumbered by the exercises of the community, and said one day to a sister with whom she was most familiar, and who sometimes seemed wearied and overcome by her exertions, "Do you think the community is obliged to you for your performances? I tell you, you are rather obliged to it for making use of you, and the greater your labour, the greater should be your joy." She esteemed the smallest rules as the ordinances of the Holy Ghost, and desired that each sister should observe them as such, saying, that each should keep them as though they related to her individually. The good mother was herself most observant of all the rules and injunctions, and when the prioress, seeing her so greatly fatigued by the menial offices, which her charity rendered to all the sisters, sick or well, would in compassion tell her that she might go and take some repose, whilst the others attended to the labours and rules of the house, she never was known to leave them, nor did she ever seem weary; but when either obedience or infirmity prevented her from joining in them, she was always distressed. She not only was most observant herself, but most zealously desired that others should be observant of their institute and manner of life, saying that they should be ready to shed their blood and lay down their lives, rather than suffer the slightest relaxation of the rules and appointments; and to secure to her monastery the perpetual observance of the rule in all its rigour, she made many promise that they

would be observant themselves, and firmly oppose the slightest relaxation of religious discipline. She also said that such as had light and knowledge of the perfection of the religious state, should at their death leave this observance as a bequest to the survivors, that so it might be always maintained. When in health, that the nuns might have time to join the others in all the common engagements of the choir, the refectory, the work-room, or the recreation, she took upon herself any employment which would have hindered them, and would even sit up and do their work whilst they rested at night, that they might find it done in the morning, and then if any sister did not appear when work was to begin in community, she would go and find her, give her a kind reproof, and inform the superior, that her fault might be corrected. She would never allow the novices to prefer their own convenience or any thing private or individual, before the good and holy devotions belonging to the smallest exercises of the order; alleging this as her reason, that we are sure of doing the will of God in any thing done in community, but not equally sure in devotions performed at our own caprice, and on our own judgment, which may be a temptation and deceit of the devil. She therefore never trusted those persons who earnestly wished to be retired, who wanted so much time for solitary devotion, so as to be sad and resentful when deprived of it, and who, provided they had leisure for their private devotions, were indifferent to the occupations of the community. She was, as

has been said, particularly solicitous, and beyond measure zealous for order in the choir, and was always there at all the divine offices, unless prevented by obedience, or severe illness; and when on these accounts she could not be with the others in choir, she always said the office with a companion, "For," said she, "I have little spirituality, but by saying it with a companion, I share in the fervour and devotion of that sister." One of the nuns, who recited the office with her in private, once noticed that on bowing her head at the Gloria Patri, at the end of a Psalm, her countenance became pale as death, and her face was covered with perspiration, although it was in the month of December, whilst her distress seemed so great as hardly to allow her to recite the words of the office. The sister then inquired what was the matter, and whether she felt ill; to which she replied, "No, but before I became a nun, my confessor, a Jesuit Father, taught me that when in reciting the Psalms I bowed my head at the Gloria, I should offer my life to the most Holy Trinity as an act of martyrdom, for the confession of our holy faith, as though by that act I presented my head to the executioner. I have now made this act with a little efficacy, and therefore turned pale as you have noticed." She gave this instruction to her daughters when mistress of novices. She was so much accustomed to make this act, that one day as she was shaving her head, she knelt down as the Angelus was ringing, and falling into ecstasy bowed her head in the same manner,

uttering these words, "O He does not come! He stays so long! My head is ready!" meaning by these words that the headsman delayed her execution, and showing the offer which she had made to God.

When she heard the signal for the Office, she was all alive, ardently desiring to go and praise God, her face expressing her overflowing joy. On hearing this signal, she instantly left whatever she had in hand, and desired her novices to do the same, saying to them, "This signal is the voice of God which calls us. We must attend to it, and perform what it requires." Another time, on hearing the vesper-bell rung, she said to the novices, "O sisters, what have you or I ever done in the service of God, which can merit the reward of being allowed to praise Him in the holy company of all these mothers and sisters? What shall we render to God for such a benefit?" By such words she taught them to be at once observant and obedient, acting with consideration; and that they might go into choir with greater reverence and recollection, she told them that when there, they should regard themselves as in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, though unworthy, and that they ought to prostrate themselves and make acts of adoration at every word. She observed herself an angelical modesty in choir, where her ardour was that of a seraph. Even when ill she would rise from her bed to attend Matins and all the hours, and when she could no longer rise, the Office was read at her bedside by

one of the sisters. She was not only assiduous herself in choir, but also desirous that others should not be absent from it, and that they should recite the Office in a suitable manner. When she heard the Office hurried over, she suffered greatly, and said, "It does not suit me to despatch the divine praises as we despatch the other business of the house," and she endeavoured to have it recited without precipitation or anxiety. Once as they were chanting very fast, she rose from her place and going up to the mother-prioress, said with humility and zeal, "Perhaps they chant in such haste because they have something to do which is more for the glory of God." By this means the fault was made known to the prioress, who took care to have it rectified. When through humility and modesty, she did not presume to say anything, she asked leave to quit the choir, not being able to endure to hear the Office slurred over in that hasty manner. At another time she took courage to say to a mother who was chanting in too much haste, "Mother, if you wish to chant in such haste, leave the choir." In short she insisted that the Office should be recited properly, though through her great zeal that which was too trivial to have been noticed elsewhere, seemed to her a great fault, and as she was highly esteemed and trusted, she brought the thing into the form which she desired, and though she had hardly voice enough to chant, yet nevertheless, such was her zeal for the divine worship, that she repeated the

lessons, chanted, and forced herself to sing with the others, as though she alone had had to lead the choir.

One of the nuns had a good talent for singing and leading the choir, but did not use it, as she was very weak. The holy mother was vexed at this, and on the nun excusing herself, by saying that she did not feel herself strong enough to continue to lead the choir, she replied, "I have asked grace for you from God, that you may be able to lead the choir for thirty years. And so it came to pass, for this sister, who for fourteen years had been so ill that the doctors regarded her malady as incurable, was after this in good health for many years, and able to direct the choir with ease, and she declared that this grace had been obtained for her through the prayers of the holy mother.

It is also true that by means of the saint the rules and constitutions of her monastery were reduced to greater perfection and rigour, and many new and excellent regulations were added, as she many times when in rapture learned that it was the will of God to perfect the said rules. She also declared in rapture the particular additions which God would have made, and caused them to be noted down separately in writing. Towards the close of her life she gave these notes to Signor Vincenzo Puccini, director and confessor to the monastery, telling him that though she was not worthy to interfere in so great a work, yet she besought him to think of writing a new copy of the rule, in which these

regulations should be inserted. He did so after her death, with the common consent of the chapter, and the newly-included rules which she had given him were sent to Rome in the year 1609, and after having been revised by the father-general of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, were confirmed by a brief of Paul V., and are now held in great veneration, being by the grace of God perfectly observed, to the great joy and consolation of that monastery.

The zeal of this servant of God was not restricted to her own monastery, but extended to all the religious orders, which she desired to see in all that strength, rigour, and purity of observance in which they were originally instituted by their founders; and frequently in her raptures she prayed for them with an indescribable fervour, and offered to endure any pain, so that the religious orders might be restored to their first state and be revived. Many times was she heard to weep and mourn in the night over the orders so greatly relaxed and fallen from their first fervour. It seemed as though this sorrow would consume her, and not being aware that she was heard, she said she would willingly have been thought mad, if by running through the world she could have reduced the religious orders to their primitive form and condition. The holy mother gave most beautiful instructions for the acquisition of religious perfection, and in particular the following:

"1. The religious in obedience should be cheerful, humble, simple, swift, and persevering, be-

lieving the voice of her superior to be the commanding voice of God, and considering herself unworthy to have its command imposed upon her, or to execute it, unless indeed there be any command given which would involve an offence against God, the rule, or her own soul.

"2. In occasions of suffering she should be strong and cheerful, believing suffering to be that royal way which leads to heaven, regarding this life as momentary, contemplating the gain of affliction, and esteeming its exercise most noble, as being the imitation of the Word made Man.

"3. In humiliations, reproofs, and mortifications, the religious must be cheerful and calm, never excusing herself, even when innocent of the fault reproved, believing humility to be the gate by which she is to enter heaven, and that by its exercise she can in some little measure make satisfaction for her iniquities.

"4. In charity the religious must be cheerful and prompt, knowing that by service to her fellow-creatures she serves God in His members, and that He regards a service done to our fellow-creatures for the love of Him, as rendered to Himself.

"5. In prayer she must be humble, fervent, resigned, persevering, and reverent, thinking herself to be in that Divine Presence before which the powers in heaven tremble.

"6. In conversation she should be most meek, humble, patient, prudent, and reserved, regarding her mothers and sisters as terrestrial angels, adorned with the image of the great God, and

even His spouses; and she should remember that when on earth He said, 'Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos.'

"7. In her words the religious should be humble, modest, and in season cheerful, remembering that word of Jesus, 'De omni verbo otioso,' &c.; and that it is also written, 'Sermo virginis, tanquam sermo Dei, rarus et prudens.' And she should also constrain herself to be always silent, unless she has before speaking considered whether her words will be for the pure glory of God, the good of her neighbour, or of absolute necessity at the time.

"8. In the time of silence she must observe it most strictly, since one unnecessary word then spoken is rarely free from fault.

"9. In spiritual works the religious must be fervent, not seeking her own reputation, but being conformed to the will of God. Exterior works should be performed without care for the body or regard of the labour, but with humility and submission to the superior.

"10. In all movements and works, interior and exterior, the religious must keep her eyes fixed in intense love on God, asking His help; nay, entreating that He Himself would work, speak, and act in us all, and offering every action to His glory, in union with the works of the Incarnate Word when on earth.

"11. The religious should consider her monastery as a sacred place, and that it represents the college of the apostles.

"12. She must see the Image of God in all the

Sisters, and should any appear mean or imperfect, believe that she has some interior gift, in which the Lord delights.

"13. In distributing the offices of the house no regard must be had to birth, or any other vain thing, but only to that spirit and light which corresponds to and is required by the office.

"14. In entering religion, the novices should be deeply impressed with the importance of Divine worship, the pre-eminent care which they should have of all things relating to it, and the reverence and gratitude with which they should receive the Holy Sacrament of confession and communion.

"15. They should be well instructed in all the spiritual exercises, and animated by word and example to the acquisition of true and real virtue. The sisters should also enlighten them on the greatness and dignity of the vocation to which God has called them; and instruct them in the rules and constitutions of the order.

"16. The religious should desire instruction in all the obligations of her rule and constitutions, that she may be able to practise them; observing and performing the penances according to the faults committed; taking care to avoid all extremes in her practice, and punctually observing the rule, which is the right way.

"17. According to her office, the religious must see that every one is provided with all necessaries, without human respect or consideration.

"18. The true religious must always remem-

ber that she herself is obliged to observe the rules and constitutions, without considering any failure in the observance of others."

At another time she enumerated six virtues as necessary to a true religious, which were these:

"1. In all her exercises, interior and exterior, let the religious never consider either herself or her own convenience; and in the service of her neighbour, let her make no account of her body.

"2. Let her spirit be so good, as to derive good from all she may see in her neighbour, even from evil itself.

"3. Let her esteem and speak of her neighbour, as she would desire herself to be esteemed and spoken of.

"4. Let her have deep charity and love for all the sisters.

"5. Let her be retired, considerate, and circumspect in speech.

"6. Let her always have an interior conviction of her faults, and of the benefits bestowed on her by God, believing that she yields Him little fruit, and ever thinking that another would have been more grateful."

CHAPTER XLVII.

OF HER GREAT LOVE TO GOD AND TO JESUS HER SPOUSE.

The love borne by this young saint to God, ever blessed, and to Jesus, her beloved Spouse, exceeds all belief. She manifested it on all

occasions, and in every word and action, chiefly by ever keeping her mind in union with God and occupied by holy thoughts, so that when the mother-prioress or others unexpectedly asked her of what she was thinking, she readily replied, that she was offering up her works to the greater glory of God, that she was uniting them to those of the Incarnate Word when on earth, that she was enjoying the divine attributes, or God's communications of Himself to His creatures, and other similar subjects; and these thoughts never hindered her in the performance of any exterior work, for all her outward actions were performed in such abstraction of mind, that she seemed only to employ her body in them, whilst her soul might rather be said to be with the Object of its love than with the body which it animated. Besides this, so constant and close was the union of her soul with God, that even in sleep and in her dreams she spoke aloud such exquisitely lovely things concerning God, that the novices would rise from their beds to listen to her, even in the depth of winter. She had attained this grace in so high a degree, that she once said to one of the novices, "It is the same to me whether I hear the order, 'Go and pray in choir,' or, 'Go and perform any other distracting exercise,' it would make no difference; or rather, were I to say, that I should find God more in the exterior exercises than the prayer, I think I should tell you the truth." She often occupied her mind in the works and mysteries of the Word made Man,

when taking her food at the table of the refectory. It is the custom in that monastery to make three pauses at the meals, during which, the reader ceases to read and rests a little, whilst the others often perform some devotion or public penance in the refectory. In these pauses the servant of God was wont to perform three pious exercises. In the first pause she joined her hands together, and adored Jesus, in reverence of the honour which His most holy Humanity paid to the Divinity before He began to feed on His work, that is, to labour for the salvation of souls, and in reverence of the adoration paid by the Virgin Mary on beholding Him born in the stable and laid in the manger. In the second pause, she unclasped her hands, resting the extremities of her fingers on the table, and considered Jesus on the cross, satisfied in the finished work of our redemption, so that as one satisfied has no more appetite for food, He, being filled with the food of our souls, could feel no delight nor complacency which could be compared to that afforded Him by the completion of human redemption, even though he should create new worlds, and work an infinity of miracles. In the same way, she kept her soul united to God, and occupied with the various mysteries of our redemption, whilst going through all her daily labour.

As it is the property of a loving soul to will what is willed by her Beloved, she always ardently desired that the will of God should be perfectly performed by and in herself and her

neighbours. This had from her infancy been her chief desire, and the first favour which she implored of God was, that she might die with the consciousness of having perfectly fulfilled the will of God. She spoke of this with the deepest feeling, and said many times that she would never undertake to do anything, if she did not believe it to be agreeable to the will of God, but that on the contrary, if after commencing an action, it occurred to her that it was neither appointed by God, nor conformed to the Divine will, she would instantly give it up, though the doing so should cost her her life, whilst she would desist from nothing, however small, which she believed to be in accordance with that will, conformity to which was the highest favour which she desired and asked of God. She would have thought it a great fault to ask any favour of God, excepting by simple prayer, for she said, "I delight to do the will of God, not that He should do mine, and hold myself equally obliged to Him, whether He grants or denies my request." And she knew this will of God to be so great a good, that she said, "If on one side I saw Paradise open, and on the other Hell, and knew it to be the will of God that I should burn in those flames, I would freely cast myself into them." So sweet to her ears were these words, "the will of God," that when in any pain, sickness, adversities, or suffering, however great, as soon as she herself understood, or heard others say, "It is the will of God that you should suffer this," she was all joy, and the suffering

became easy to her, and she herself said it was a sign of love to God to desire to do His divine will. She was rapt in ecstasy in merely hearing these words, "The Will of God," and said to her sisters, "Do you not feel the sweetness contained in these simple words, 'The Will of God?'" One evening in particular, on hearing some words relating to the will of God, when the nuns retired to rest, she remained behind in an ecstasy, and ran through the monastery, exclaiming with great fervour, "The Will of God is lovely," and calling on the other nuns to confess that the will of God was lovely. They came from their cells, and following her into our Lady's chapel, all, incited by her, confessed with one voice, that the will of God is lovely, at which she was greatly delighted, and exhorted them all to this virtue, (love of the Divine will,) saying, "If you would arrive at great perfection in a short time, you must try to perform all your works with the intention of fulfilling the Divine Will, for this intention has virtue to sanctify our works."

Another property of a loving soul is to hate and abominate everything which opposes or offends the beloved person, and with all its powers to love, desire, and seek the good, the glory, and the honour of this beloved one; and this appeared in its highest perfection in this holy virgin, who ever held sin in horror and abomination, especially mortal sin, which is directly opposed to God; and not only did she never commit it during her whole life, but even in others it so greatly offended her and occasioned her such grief, that

on merely hearing mortal sin named, she could with great difficulty prevent herself from crying out, and so expressing the intense distress of her soul. It seemed to her impossible that a Christian should be found who could deliberately commit sin and offend God, and fifteen days before her death, she uttered these words, "I leave this world simply incapable of understanding in what way a creature can deliberately consent to commit mortal sin against its Creator." She, on the contrary, not only sought to give honour and glory to God with all her powers, and therefore made a voluntary dedication of herself to His service, performing every action for His glory, and devoting to Him every interior and exterior movement, even to a look, a word, and such like; but further, she sought with all diligence that God should be glorified by others, reminding her sisters to offer every work to the glory of God. She would have run through the world to give glory to God in the conversion of souls, and so ardent was her love, that she would have yielded her life a thousand times a day for the honour and glory of God. She sometimes said with tears that it seemed to her a great wonder, and one which she confessed she did not understand, that there should be in the world so few persons who seek the honour and glory of God, and she tenderly loved those religious whom she knew to be true promotors of the honour and glory of God, and accustomed her daughters to zeal for the honour of God,

and to an endeavour to glorify Him, by maintaining themselves in perpetual union with Him. When some said that it was impossible to be in constant union with God, she replied, "True, it is impossible to be always united to God by constantly thinking of Him actually, for this can only be perfectly done in the heavenly country; but to unite ourselves to God by a constant regard to Him, is possible, since if we labour for the good of creatures, whether in soul or body, for no other end than to give honour and glory to God, so that were there no God, we should not do it, it cannot be denied that we are in this way constantly united to God, and if we labour for the good of the community, because the community belongs to God, and do all we do with the view to His pleasure, honour, and glory, the union of our souls with God is certain, and so in all other actions." And by all ways and means she sought to excite and inflame others to glorify God in all things.

But above all, her great transports of love bore witness to its reality. These cannot fully be described, for her face, losing in a moment the paleness which had been produced by her penances and austere religious life, became glowing, beaming, and full; her eyes shone and sparkled like stars, and finding no repose, she cried out, saying, "O Love, O God, who lovest Thy creatures with a pure love! O God of Love! O God of Love! O my Lord, no more love! O my Jesus, the love which Thou dost bear to all creatures is too great! Not too great for Thy greatness, but too

great for the creature, so vile, so base!" She took a crucifix in her hand, and with agility more angelical than human, ran through the house, crying out, "O Love, Love, Love! O my God, I can never cease to call Thee Love, Joy of my heart, Hope and Comfort of my soul!" To the nuns who followed her, she said, "Know you not, dear sisters, that Jesus is all love? Yes, He is mad with love (Pazzo d' amore;)" and fixing her eyes on the crucifix which she carried, she said, "O Jesus, I say that Thou art mad with love, and I will say it for ever;" and she continued to say that which her love dictated. She desired as many voices as should be heard from the east to the west, and in every part of the earth, nay, even in hell itself, that she might cause God to be known and reverenced as true Love. She passed whole days in these transports, and when she met any of the nuns in the house, she would take them by the hand and ask them if they loved the Love; and when they replied that they did love Him, or that they wished to love Him, her joy overflowed. She caught the bell-ropes and rang the bells, calling on souls to come and love the Love; and thinking how little He was loved, she said, "O Love, if Thou findest no resting-place, come all to me! Sometimes, overpowered by the excess and abundance of this love, she said, "I can no longer bear so much love, retain it in Thyself;" and through the great and consuming flame of this Divine Love, which she felt in herself, she could find

no rest, but tore her clothes, went into the garden and tore up the plants or whatever came to hand. In the midst of winter she could not bear woollen garments, through that fire of love which burned in her breast, but cut and loosened her habits.

Once especially, on the Feast of the Invention of the Cross, May 3rd, 1592, being twenty-six years old, she had one of these marvellous transports, in which, after having communicated in the morning, she remained for one hour immoveable and rapt, and spoke for a long time of the excellence of the Holy Cross, and then began to exclaim, "O Love, O Love, O Love, O ye souls created by Love, why do ye not love that Love? What is love but God? Deus charitas est! O Love, Thou dost cause me to consume and melt; Thou causest me to die, and yet I live." Here she used many devout actions and gestures, crying aloud, "Come, O ye souls, to love the Love; come to love our God!" Feeling so great a flame in her face, she fanned herself with her veil, then ran to the well and drank a quantity of fresh water, bathed her face and arms, poured it into her bosom, and so great was the flame which burned in her breast, that even externally she seemed to consume. After this, as has been said, she with wonderful agility sprang on the cornice of the choir and took a crucifix which was on it, which she carried to the chapter-room of the monastery, where she remained the whole day from morning till evening at the foot of that cross, and frequent-

ly embracing it. She took no food during this time, and explained most lovely thoughts and ideas on the love of God and mystery of the cross, and many times she placed her mouth at the side of that crucifix, and seemed by her movements to be drawing some liquor from it.

Many were the signs which she gave of her great love for God, and she was wont to make many interior acts of love, which I shall insert here for general use, and which are as follows:

"1. To love, rejoice, and delight in the Divine attributes, that is, in the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and in that infinite love with which God loves Himself and all creatures.

"2. To desire that God should enjoy all that beatitude, honour, and glory, which He has and will have for all eternity.

"3. To rejoice in the interchange of communications which the Three Divine Persons have amongst themselves.

"4. To rejoice that God is so great and infinite, as to be incomprehensible to creatures.

"5. To rejoice in that infinite love with which God loves Himself, has loved Himself, and will love Himself to all eternity; and to take pleasure in the thought that all creatures, and the blessed spirits, are not sufficient to give Him adequate love, and to thank His Divine Majesty, who infinitely loves Himself.

"6. To rejoice in all those treasures and infinite graces which the Eternal Father gives and communicates to the Humanity of the Word, as in the grace by which He wrought miracles

and attracted the hearts of creatures to Himself.

"7. To rejoice that the Eternal Father has given us as an inheritance to the Incarnate Word, as also in the delight which He takes in that inheritance, and in the complacency with which He regards the souls of the just.

"8. To rejoice in that love which the Incarnate Word bears to virginity.

"9. To offer God Himself to God, in thanksgiving for all the glory, honour, and beatitude which He possesses and will communicate to us, and in thanksgiving for all the gifts and graces communicated to all creatures.

"10. To say to the Lord, 'If at this moment I could give Thee all the honour, praise, and glory, now rendered Thee by all the blessed spirits and the just on earth, I would gladly do it; but since I cannot, accept my good-will towards Thy Divine Majesty.'

"11. To offer yourself to God, and desire all that perfection in which He delights, as He wills to give it.

"12. To bend the will to love all creatures purely because God loves them, and to rejoice in His love for them and in the blessings which He imparts to them; and though it cannot be that God should will that any creature should offend or give us pain, yet, nevertheless, we should desire for all the perfection and glory of the seraphim, even though they should use it to our offence; in all things agreeing to will what God wills."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OF HER CONSTANT AND ARDENT DESIRE OF HOLY COMMUNION, AND HER ANXIETY THAT OTHERS SHOULD WORTHILY RECEIVE IT.

Our saint's ardent love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ kindled in her heart a great desire to enjoy and unite herself to Him in the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, though we may also reasonably believe that this interior love was in her the effect of holy Communion. It has been already said, that even from her childhood, when yet too young to communicate, she rejoiced in seeing others receive the blessed Sacrament; and having entered the monastery, she usually communicated every day during her whole life, when not prevented by the use of medicines. She suffered greatly in doing this, for when ill, her fever so completely exhausted her bodily strength, that she could hardly stand on her feet. Nevertheless, such was her desire of this divine food, that she rose and went to communion every morning with the others, though her cell was at a distance, and she had three flights of steps to ascend, nor would she desist till obliged to be carried. Then, indeed, she remained in bed, and had the holy Communion brought her; but even there her sufferings were great; for as her illness did not allow her to take sufficient food for her

support in the evening, she was obliged to be fed every three hours, and if she remained any longer without food, she felt extreme exhaustion, and a violent cough was excited, which ceased on her taking food; but not to deprive herself of communion, she endured that suffering every night till the father came to give her communion in the morning, and if any one advised her to relieve her sufferings by taking food, she replied, "Sister, I have too much need of this spiritual help. I ought to do more than this for Jesus, and I offer Him this little suffering in preparation, and whilst I can, I will suffer this little, so that I may receive Him, for though I have no longer feeling, even in communion, Jesus having withdrawn it from me, yet still in communion my heart receives great peace and quiet. Indeed, in this illness I find rest in nothing else." She also said that she felt a great difference on those days when the remedies given prevented her from communicating, for that in doing so, she felt herself strengthened to bear the pain and afflictions of her illness, but that when she did not do so, she felt a want in her soul; and one morning, when she did not communicate, she suffered spasm and exhaustion from the want of that food. When well, she would anticipate the hour for going to holy Communion, and sometimes, so great was her desire, that without being aware of it, she did not wait to be touched when it was her turn to communicate, as was the custom there, but went before the superior and the ancient mothers.

Through her great desire she was often rapt in ecstasy, and so went to communion; and when she was occupied in some distant apartment, in the manual labour of the monastery, if she heard the signal for communion, she instantly went, and sometimes, in her haste, did not lay down what she had in her hands, as happened once when being with the others occupied in making bread, she heard the signal for communion, which the others, on account of the distance, did not hear, and immediately departed for the place of communion, and with bare arms and two loaves of paste in her hands received communion, for being in ecstasy the nuns could not take the loaves from her. At other times, she would be in ecstasy, recover herself, and receive communion, immediately after which she was again rapt. She was generally in ecstasy after communion, and received most beautiful intelligences and ideas of this most Divine Sacrament.

She was wont to speak of the Blessed Sacrament with such fervour as to inflame all who listened to her. One morning, whilst she was in the novitiate, the father-confessor, being rather unwell, did not give communion at the usual hour, and the mistress of novices, Mother Vangelista, thinking that the father would not give communion that morning, ordered the saint to take her breakfast, which she greatly needed. The good novice seemed to hesitate for some time, showing that she yet hoped for communion, but at last, in obedience, took her breakfast. She

had scarcely finished when the confessor came, and the communion-signal was given. Sister Mary Magdalene, thinking of her irreparable loss of this precious pledge, burst into such a flood of tears as constrained her mistress to weep with her. This desire for holy Communion sprang from her deep knowledge of this divine food, and from her intense love, as may be gathered from the following circumstances: She had given one of her daughters the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and the latter, having made the meditation on the institution of the most holy Sacrament, when giving her mistress an account of her meditation, said, that in considering the love of Jesus in the institution, she had stopped and had not gone on. St. Mary Magdalene fell into ecstasy at the word "love," and many times repeated, "When we rest in the love, we can proceed no further, but we must rest in the love."

At three different times she showed in her raptures that she had received communion from the very hands of Jesus. The first was on Holy Thursday, 1585, on which day she was permitted to participate in the Passion of our Lord, being yet in her novitiate and nineteen years of age. In her rapture she went through the Passion, and whilst contemplating the Holy Supper, in which Jesus instituted the most Holy Sacrament, she with great devotion, placed herself in the attitude of communion, opening and closing her mouth, pressing her hands on her bosom with the appearance of enjoyment. She then uttered

these words, "Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus, collocavit se in anima mea; dilata cor meum, ut inducat omnem creaturam ad communionem corporis, et sanguinis tui." On recovering from her rapture, she declared to her superiors that she had received communion from the hands of Jesus. The second time was on the 7th of August, the feast of St. Albert the Carmelite, as has been before mentioned, when being clothed with that habit which issued from the wounds of Jesus, she exclaimed, "Domine, non sum digna," opened her mouth, was absorbed in recollection, and held a colloquy with Jesus. On recovering from this rapture, she also declared that she had received communion from the hands of our Lord. The third time was on another Holy Thursday, 1592, when she again participated in the Passion of Jesus, and was communicated as before.

She always prepared herself for holy Communion with great humility and devotion, and so clearly discerned the dignity of this heavenly food and her own wretchedness and meanness, that when going to communion, she feared lest the earth should open and swallow her up alive, so unworthy did she deem herself, and she would say, "As for me, I would never dare to approach the divine table were not the Blood of Jesus sprinkled on me."

The admirable fruits which she derived from the constant use of this Divine Food, were a strict union with God, and a perfect love of Him. She every day made frequent visits to the Most

Holy Sacrament of the Altar, honouring Him with the most fervent devotion of her heart, and whenever she could see her Lord under the sacramental species, or was present when He was brought to the sick in the house, or on any other occasion, she greatly rejoiced, and could hardly force herself from the place, always going as near as she could, though endeavouring to do so without being perceived by others. One day she said to a nun in her confidence, "O sister, did you but know my great joy, you would exult and rejoice with me;" and on the other asking the cause of her delight, she said, "Our father-confessor will expose the Blessed Sacrament for a whole day on the altar," and she could hardly contain herself for joy. Though she communicated daily, still at the end of eight days, if she had had no opportunity of confessing, even when not obliged to do so, she would not venture to approach the holy communion, without being absolved, for she said it was too great a thing to receive God. In that monastery, it is the custom when daily communion is prevented by the illness of the father, or any other cause, that the nuns should communicate spiritually. The usual signal for communion is given in the morning, and all being assembled, they pray for half an hour, and then make a spiritual communion. It was on one of these days that the saint was communicated by St. Albert the Carmelite, saying the Confiteor and the Domine, non sum digna, and doing all that she was accustomed to do when receiving communion, and

she afterwards declared that she had seen the same saint with the ciborium in his hand, going to communicate the other nuns. Her enlarged charity ardently desired that others also, and especially those of her own monastery, should have a great hunger for that most Holy Sacrament, and this as well for the glory of God as for the good of their souls.

She was often seen to weep if she knew that any one had voluntarily absented herself from communion, and if able she would go and find her, and show her her error, exhorting her to frequent communion, by saying, "Sister, you do not know of what you have been deprived. O how much blessing you have lost this morning by not communicating!" showing her the benefits which we receive in communion, and how we wrong the love of Jesus by abstaining from it. She earnestly besought of God, and entreated others to beseech Him, that He would to the end of the world graciously preserve in that monastery the frequent use of holy communion, and give directors and confessors who would delight in maintaining it, for she considered that the fruit of this frequent communion was that great detachment from secular intercourse, which was remarkable in the community, and maintained that this exemption from the world, in which she greatly delighted, could not have existed but for the frequency of communion. On the morning of the 28th of August, the Feast of St. Austin, the communion was over, and two nuns remained uncommunicated. Mass had

ended, but the holy mother in rapture went and knocked at the grate. The confessor came, and she besought him to do these two nuns the charity to communicate them, which he did, and she again fell into rapture. A sister having been absent from communion on a Thursday, which, as we have seen, she called "The day of love," she said on meeting her, "You have not received Love to-day!"

Her daughters inquired how they were to prepare themselves for holy Communion, when she replied, that for preparation, it was sufficient to consider attentively, and endeavour to apprehend, that He whom we receive is God, who has bequeathed Himself to us in Love, and in remembrance of His Passion, as He commanded. She further added, "Till vespers, pass the hours in thanksgiving for communion received; from vespers to matins, pass the time in preparation, thinking that you are to communicate, and know that one communion is a preparation for another. Offer also the actions of the day to God in preparation, performing them with intentions of love and gratitude, and the desire of pleasing God. Desire to benefit the whole world, and that every soul should hunger for this Blessed Sacrament. Think that you are going to perform the greatest action which can be performed in this world, which is to receive the great God into yourself, and think also, that unworthy as you are, Jesus gives you Himself in the Blessed Sacrament. O, how pure should be your heart which is to receive the

Fountain of purity! If you have a difference with any sister, try before communion to feel in yourself an interior sweetness towards all the sisters, and if you do not feel it, ask it of Jesus. If then you feel ready to give your life and blood for that sister, were such the will of God, you may freely go to communion."

Sometimes, to awaken the devotion of her novices to the most Holy Sacrament, she would say, "My little souls, (animine,) in so many hours we shall receive Jesus; prepare your hearts." At another time she would say, "In how many hours shall we receive Jesus? The time should seem to us a year." She said besides, that one communion rightly made sufficed to make a saint, and that when there was no fruit the deficiency arose from not discerning the greatness of that which is done by the communicant. She once knelt down in the midst of all the novices with her hands crossed on her breast, and with much fervour said, "O my sisters, could we but understand, that whilst the sacred Species remains in us, the Divine Word works in us the same operations which He performs in the bosom of the Eternal Father, and that as the Word is in the Father, and the Father in the Word, and the Holy Ghost inseparably in one and in the other, so we in receiving the Word, receive all the most Holy Trinity; O, (I say,) could we but understand this, if we but apprehended this, we should not so frequently go casually and for form's sake, we should not abstain from receiving on such slight occasions and excuses. Surely

we should think much, before we passed it by." These words made an incredible impression on her well-disposed young novices. After communion she did not wish them to go very quickly to the exercises of the monastery, but to stay for some time, enjoying, praising, and thanking the great Guest, whom they had received into their bosoms, and exercising themselves in affectionate fervour towards Him, recommending to Him their own wants and those of the Church. She said that this was the time to learn of God, how to serve Him according to His will, and said, "One who learns of Jesus, needs neither books nor instructions. This is our most precious time, the most fitting time in which we can converse with God, and give Him room to purify, enlighten, and sanctify our souls, and to satisfy their desires, nor can there be found a more effectual means of purifying the soul than this."

Such were her instructions concerning Holy Communion, and God gave her the grace to see Jesus in the bosom of her sisters under various forms. She saw Him in some as an Infant; at others at the ages of twelve, thirty, and thirty-three years; in others suffering or crucified, according to the desires, perfection, and capability of each nun.

Once being in company with the other sisters, she glanced on all, and then said to one of her companions, "O how I love these sisters, regarding them as so many tabernacles of the Blessed Sacrament, which they so often receive and conceal in their breasts!" One Easter morning,

whilst at table in the refectory, her face became so cheerful and glad, as actually to shine with delight. One of her novices who was serving, perceived this, and said to her in confidence, "Mother-mistress, whence proceeds that joy?" "From the beauty of the Divine Presence," she replied, "for I behold Jesus reposing in the hearts of all the sisters." "In what form?" rejoined the novice. "All glorious and risen," she replied, "as the Church represents Him to-day." Here, in her delight, she ceased to act, and fell into rapture, in which she continued for some time to hold a devout colloquy with Jesus.

CHAPTER XLIX.

OF HER CHARITY TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOURS, HER ZEAL FOR THEIR SALVATION, AND THE SPIRITUAL AND CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY IN WHICH SHE EXERCISED THAT CHARITY.

The love of charity which this servant of God bore to her neighbours, and her zeal for their salvation, were most eminent. She exerted all her knowledge and abilities in assisting them and relieving their spiritual and temporal wants, even depriving herself of all convenience and comfort, and unsparingly taking every fatigue and suffering on herself.

She loved her neighbours, she said, because they were created in the image of God, because Jesus loved them and had purchased them with

His blood. Besides all that she had done for the good of her neighbours in her childhood and before entering the monastery, she was when there so zealous for the salvation of souls as to declare that she in some sort envied the birds who could fly wherever they would, for could she have done so consistently with her profession, she would have desired to fly through the world that she might aid in converting souls to God. Sometimes she said, "I would that I could go amongst the infidels and even to the Indies to take the Indian children and teach them the principles of our faith, that Jesus may possess and be possessed by those souls;" and so intense was this desire, that even in sleep and in her dreams, she spoke of the conversion of the Indians. When she heard in the refectory letters read from India and Japan, containing accounts of conversions and the martyrdom of some Jesuit fathers, she seemed actually to glow and melt with desire to be in those lands, that she might aid in those conversions, and lay down her life in martyrdom for the love of God and of the souls there. When reading in the novitiate the Life of St. Francis and the number of the infidels whom he converted and baptised, she said, "Let us also ask some of these souls from God. Let us offer Him all that we shall do to-day for these souls. Let us ask of God as many souls as we shall take steps in the monastery, utter words in the office, put our hands into the wash-tub, or draw out our needles in sewing." In this way she aroused the zeal of

her daughters. She once said, "If the Lord had asked me as He did St. Thomas of Aquin, what favour I would have, I should have asked the salvation of souls."

She was once found weeping bitterly, and on being asked why she wept, replied, "Because I seem to be idle and to do nothing for the good of souls." She often said, like St. Catherine of Sienna, that Jesus mourned that there was no one to oppose His anger and fury for sinners, and added, "We shall have to give an account to God, for many souls who now burn in hell; for had you and I been fervent in prayer and in offering the blood of Jesus for them, and recommending them with warm affection to God, perhaps He would have been appeased, and they would not have been in those flames." She once said, that had it been the will of God, she would have chosen to be in hell for the salvation of souls, could she have been there without blaspheming and hating God. This, her great zeal for souls, arose from her having been shown by Jesus the beauty of a soul in grace, and the deformity of a soul in sin. Therefore she wept and mourned for the offences given to God, and ordinarily directed her prayers to the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners. Many times also in rapture she begged of God that she might endure torments, pains, and infirmities, for the salvation of souls and conversion of sinners, and she was sometimes gratified by seeing many persons converted for whom she had prayed. The confessor once com-

mended two sinners to her prayers, for whom she accordingly prayed much and offered many penances for some months, and at the end of that time the confessor told Mother Vangelista that Sister Mary Magdalene's prayers had been answered in their conversion to a good life. For the good of souls she would moreover have been supremely glad to have been deprived of the sense of grace and to have lost every spiritual enjoyment, so that, as she said, there might only have remained the reality of grace and a good will with which she might have loved, served, and honoured God, and assisted souls.

She once said in a transport, "O Lord, if Thou wilt favour me by giving me these souls which I ask of Thee, I will be content not to possess the glory and happiness prepared for me by Thee." She said to her sisters, "Let us not be surpassed by seculars. Who knows but that many souls may remain unconverted, because we have not been diligent and fervent in prayer to God for them? We have not only to give an account of bad actions committed, but also of good works omitted, when we might have performed them." She often desired the novices to offer the blood of Christ for sinners, and thought it a sweet thing to make this offering fifty times a day. She would rise at midnight and go before the Blessed Sacrament, to ask with floods of tears for the conversion of sinners. As she well knew that the time of the Carnival was a time in which sinners of

the world commit more sins than usual, she made all her novices take the discipline, and recite the Seven Penitential Psalms for sinners. It being her office to awaken the nuns every night for matins, on the night of Shrove Thursday, (called in Florence the Berlingaccio,) she agreed with some of the sisters, that instead of calling the community by the sound of the bell, they should go through the convent and awaken the nuns by scourging and disciplining themselves at all the cells, for the conversion of sinners. As she every day performed various acts for this object, she taught others to do the same. In Lent, when abandoned women were taken to hear the preaching at the Magdalene, she would recommend them earnestly to the prayers of the nuns, saying, "I commend my sisters to you." If a nun asked her who were her "sisters," and understood of whom she was speaking, she was in amazement at the humility of that pure soul in classing herself with such as they. She performed most rigorous penances for them and others, scalding her flesh with drops of burning wax, which she dropped from a candle, of three pounds' weight, blood mingling with the wax on her tunic; she wore a hair-shirt, passed the nights in prayer, bound her flesh with cords in such a manner as to fetch blood, scourged herself with an iron chain, in doing which she shed much blood, but that it might not be seen, she would either wash the pavement, or cover it with a blue cloth, but do what she would her tunic was always blood-stained.

She once took a crucifix in her hand and said, "O Lord, Thou wert willing to die on the cross, and to give all Thy blood for sinners, and I, O my God, would give my own blood and suffer the loss of life for their conversion." In a rapture she showed by her gestures that she saw a priest far from the way of God, and so fervently did she pray for him, that she soon merited his return to a good state. And she gave herself to prayer for other priests, whom she saw stained with sin like the former, saying, "O Lord, if they who should be the light of the world be in darkness, in what darkness must others be! If they who are the salt of the earth, become insipid, how, O my Jesus, can they season others! How can they show the way which leads to Thee, if they themselves be walking in the opposite way!" So earnestly did she pray, that at last she intimated that these priests also had reflected and were converted. She was also zealous in recommending to God the Holy Church universal, and the Sovereign Pontiff as her Head, and usually remembered them in her rapture. Being once in rapture on the festival of the Holy Ghost, she asked of a sister who was present, if she had that day recommended the Sovereign Pontiff and the Holy Church to the Lord, and on her replying that she had not, she replied with great zeal and amazement, "O what a spouse, not daily to pray for the church of God!" and many other words which caused her to reflect well on her state.

CHAPTER L.

OF HER ZEAL AND CHARITY FOR THE SISTERS OF HER MONASTERY.

If such were the zeal and charity of this great saint towards her neighbours generally, even when far from her, we may easily believe that it produced still more wonderful effects when exercised towards her mothers and spiritual sisters in the monastery, whom without distinction she sought to edify, aid, and console with such intense affection, that it would seem as though she desired to give her own blood for them; whence she was generally called "The Mother of Charity," and "The Charity of the Monastery." Her charity was pure, sincere, without any interest, not regarding persons, but souls; so that her ordinary name for her daughters, and even for others, was "souls." In the year 1593, on the 24th of August, Jesus in rapture gave her some rules to observe, which we shall hereafter insert; and one amongst the rest, that as the stag thirsts for the water, so she should thirst for the constant exercise of charity towards His members, that is, towards rational creatures; and that she should no more regard the weakness and weariness of her body, than the earth under her feet. She even observed this rule with such rigour, that she was the mother and the common servant of the monastery in all the spiritual and corporal

wants of each, whether professed or lay-sister. If there were need of any act or work, and there were few who knew how to do it, that the community might not be deprived of it, she never failed to learn it with the greatest care. If she saw a nun in distress, she would in compassion fall into ecstasy; she would pray for her to our Blessed Lady, and seek to comfort her. The afflictions of others were her own, so that, though herself afflicted, either by illness or anything else, if she saw any one suffering, interiorly or externally, she instantly forgot herself, and gave herself up to her comfort and relief, regarding her own sufferings as nothing.

Whilst she was suffering intensely in her five years of probation, as also in the bitter pains of her last sickness, she found no greater alleviation of her own sufferings, than to remember the sufferings of others. Many times she would stand the whole night consoling the afflicted and the tempted, weeping like them over their sorrows, and if she saw that one of them was fasting, she would bring her nourishment, and put it in her mouth with her own hands, and take food with her to encourage her, supporting her by reminding her in sweet words of the glories of Paradise, and supremely delighted was she in seeing others consoled. In her presence the others were obliged to be careful how they mentioned the wants of a neighbour, or any labour needed in the monastery, for she instantly offered herself and deprived herself of every convenience to assist her sisters, nor

was she ever weary. She thought more of assisting the sisters in their need than of withdrawing to pray, or to taste other spiritual enjoyments. Once, whilst making the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, she left off, and on being asked why, replied, "I left God for God, it was to help a sister who was in some trouble;" and to veil her charity, she said that she did not know how to pray, and therefore was obliged to employ herself in other external works.

She regarded God in all whom she served, and taught her sisters to do the same, saying, "You should think yourself unworthy to serve souls, who are the tabernacles of the Holy Ghost, and see God in all, and if you wish to serve the sisters with a true and pure love, regard them as the living images of God, the Spouses of the Word, or as the Temples of the Holy Ghost, and sisters of the angels, that so you may bear them reverence and love, may serve them with true affection, and be one heart and one soul with them. I love them," she said, "because Jesus loves them, and would always endure anything, so that I could but comfort and tranquillize a soul, for a disturbed heart can present no true resting-place to God, and I desire nothing so much as to give God to His creatures." She most especially manifested her zeal and charity towards three classes of persons in the monastery, the novices, the lay-sisters, and the sick. As a tender mother loves her own children with intense love, so she loved all her novices as though she had given them

birth, and in temptations and tribulations they had recourse to her as to a mother, when she frequently dispelled their temptations by making the sign of the cross on their hearts.

A novice who had been poor in the world feared that she should not gain the merit of poverty in the community, as she had given up nothing, and was now provided with all things necessary. She named this fear to the saint, who said to her, "Every time that this idea enters your mind, protest before God, that had you all the riches in the world, and were you an empress, you would leave all for the love of Him." She then told her if the feeling returned, to come to her. The novice went to her many times, and at last found her praying, when she made the sign of the cross over her, and freed her from every temptation. During the twelve years in which she was school-mistress, superior of the juniorate, and mistress of the novices, she instructed her daughters with indescribable zeal and charity, sparing no labour, and to their great edification, exciting them by her example to the acquirement of every virtue.

When she was superior and the solemn feasts occurred, knowing that she was frequently in rapture at these times, and might consequently be hindered, she provided for and distributed various employments amongst her subjects, chiefly that of attending on the sick novices at the appointed hours, and when the time came, she remembered it even in rapture, and ordered them not to omit the work.

When any novice was taken ill, the services and attentions which she rendered her were so great, that those who were but newly come from their own houses, and from the tenderness and caresses of their own mothers, said that their love and service were nothing in comparison with hers. She was most watchful during the night, and did she but hear the least sigh, was instantly at the bedside of the novice, whom she would feed with her own hands, and she did this with so cheerful a countenance, that it excited confidence in all, since in asking her services they seemed to be rendering service to her.

There never proceeded from her mouth the least word which could offend her neighbour, and in the presence of the novices, she always excused the imperfections of others, that she might accustom them to do the same, remarking that "as glass when struck is easily broken, so, if you take your neighbour's name into your mouth, you may easily offend him." Whatever might be her inconvenience, she never left any possible work of charity undone. Indeed, she was unwearied in performing such works, and would have regarded that day as lost, in which she had not rendered some charitable service to her neighbour.

Her services to the lay-sisters were innumerable, as well as those works which she performed with them, and so greatly did she exert her bodily strength, that she alone did more than four lay-sisters together.

For six years successively she helped a lay-

sister to knead the bread, and was herself the first to rise and begin the work, carrying the dough with great labour from the tables to the oven, as though she had been actually a lay-sister, though her constitution was most delicate.

She might always be found with the lay-sisters, not only making the bread, but scouring, washing, and performing other offices. When the washing was to be done, she would fetch the wood, fill the boilers, rise in the night before the lay-sisters, light the fires, beat the lye, and wash. By washing so much, she dislocated and disturbed one of the bones of her hand. At other times she would at night do the work of the lay-sisters by herself, and would stand for four or five hours washing the clothes, for fear of being seen by day. When mistress of the novices, she would send them through the house to find the soiled clothes, which she would then wash at night.

When she had associates in the office, she always took the most laborious part on herself, such as washing, cleaning, drawing water, and scouring, and often wished to do all the work herself. It might truly have been said, that there was none of her sisters to whom she had not performed some act of charity, and her example excited others to do the same. When labouring at night with the lay-sisters, she would beg them to leave off and go to rest, whilst she who had come to help them would go on working with great cheerfulness. When entreated not to do so much, she used to say

that she had the flesh of an ass, and did not feel anything, and that she seemed to herself to be useless, and not to know how to do anything. "This body," said she, "ought to be allowed no rest. It is a little ass, which should bear the burden night and day."

She took it in turns with a lay-sister to call up the nuns to matins every alternate week. The lay-sister was once taken ill, and the saint begged her to let her perform that office alone, telling her that she should not sleep were she not to do it. The lay-sister was content, and for fifteen years the saint called the nuns to matins every morning. When a lay-sister was unwilling that she should assist her in any office, she would say, "O sister, do not take the merit of this work from me. Let me do this, and then you shall do something for me, for it is better for us to work for each other than to labour for ourselves, since in doing things for ourselves, or for our own use, there may be self-love, which cannot mix with what we do for others." When the engagements of her office prevented her from taking her part in the labours of the lay-sisters, she would say, "These poor little things have worked hard; I wish them to rest when they have done;" and then she would go and make their beds, and arrange their cells, so that they were confounded at her excess of charity. But though she treated them with this great familiarity and meekness, and, as has been said, assisted them in all their labours, yet her conversation

was accompanied by such gravity and majesty, that they could not take the slightest liberty with her, but always revered her, and so great was her virtue that no one would have dared to utter an idle word in her presence. Her charity to the sick was incredible. She seemed to envy the infirmarians, and said that there was no office which she should more have desired to fill than that of infirmarian. She delighted to think of it, and would say, "Were I infirmarian, I would do this, give this assistance, provide for such a thing at their death, which I cannot do now to my satisfaction, being employed in other offices." Once when she herself was ill, she said, "I am content to do the will of God, but had He been pleased to make me a nurse in a hospital, I should have received a great grace, and would have rendered every service to the sick, for seeing I neither deserve nor know how to lead souls to God, which service would still more delight me, I should in this way at least have been of some use to the bodies of His creatures."

If in the depth of winter some sick lay-sister had to take a draught at night and morning, she would offer to bring it to her in the morning, that the infirmarian might not be inconvenienced by rising in the cold. When any one was seriously ill, she was the first to visit her, and when mistress of the novices, she was so constantly going backwards and forwards to see them, as clearly to show that she burned with charity, and would never omit any possible act of love

to her neighbour, whatever it might cost her. In her love for the sick she forgot herself, taking no care of her body.

She anticipated and provided for all the wants of the sick, so that they were secured from the smallest solicitude respecting themselves, and she made arrangements with the superiors for their comfort. If she knew that any one wanted, or ever desired anything that she had, she deprived herself of it to gratify her, or if she had it not, would seek to procure it. When she saw an invalid in pain she said, "Would that I could take these pains from you, for being more robust than you I should not feel them so much."

She tried to get everything that could be useful to the sick, and the nuns were contented to be ill, for the consolation of having this blessed servant of God always about them, serving, comforting them, and performing the most revolting offices of the infirmary for them. In her charity she thought of everything that would please them, and endeavoured to obtain it for them. If any one sent her a present, she at once thought of the convalescents, and carried the things to them herself, first asking permission for them to have them, lest they should be ashamed to ask for themselves. At other times, she would, with admirable management, give something to an invalid without letting her know from whom it came, which she did to conceal herself, and to avoid being thanked, contenting herself with doing good to her neighbour, without her feeling obligation or gratitude.

Even when ill herself, for the sake of others she would deprive herself of what was given her, and that they might accept it, would say that she did not like it, or that it did not agree with her; and it was marvellous to see how, whilst even in the most intimate union with God, she thought with such exquisite care of the very slightest thing which could relieve the necessities of her neighbour. Hardly had her raptures passed, than she was occupied with these thoughts. She once nursed a sick sister, named Sister Carita, who was consumptive and blind for a whole year, as though she had been her servant, swept her room, made her bed, washed her linen, and performed the lowest offices for her. When this sister was in extremity, she watched her for ten days and nights without taking off her clothes, and when asked by the prioress why she rendered such great services to this sick person, she said that Jesus had appeared to her in the form of a poor man, and had told her that if she wished to please Him, she must serve Him in this His spouse. She nursed one nun, named Barbara Bassi, for fifteen days and nights without ever taking off her clothes, or lying down, only taking a little sleep in a chair. She also did great service to another lay-sister, named Sister Mattea, who had such a wound in her leg, that worms bred in it, and it became so corrupted and offensive, that in consequence of the effluvia arising from it, she was placed in a separate apartment of the infirmary, lest the other sisters should be injured by it. Sister Mary Magdalene cleaned

the wound, removed the worms and the corruption, and even went so far as to place her mouth on the wound itself, as the sufferer declared to the prioress, and as the saint afterwards acknowledged in obedience when examined by the superiors. She rendered these services to all the other nuns and lay-sisters when sick, always giving them every assistance in her power, and not only helping their bodies, but giving them great spiritual aid, consoling them, exhorting them to patience, and reading good books to them, and when her occupations would not allow her to do this, she sent one of the novices to do it.

Every sister desired and prayed that this servant of God might be present at her last passage, which she was always happy to be. She would read the Passion to the dying, speak to them of God, and induce them to perform various acts of devotion, and when in bed, in her last sickness, though she could not walk to their cells, she would cause herself to be carried to the dying, saying, "Since the Bridegroom does not come for me, I wish to be with others when He comes for them." Even after their death she watched by their bodies till their burial, and whilst praying for them was almost always shown by God the state of their souls, as has been said. When she saw them in Purgatory, she offered her pains to God for their release, and was often wont to suffer for them, enduring sharp pains as though her flesh had been lacerated by dogs or by serpents, besides which she fasted, used disciplines and other

penances, and prayed for them. She saw them suffering in Purgatory, and the faults for which they suffered, and also saw them liberated and ascending to Paradise, where she beheld their glory, and the virtues by which they had acquired it. She not only saw the souls of the nuns, but also of her relatives and other persons who had been committed to her prayers.

CHAPTER LI.

OF AN EXAMEN OF CONSCIENCE WHICH SHE MADE IN RAPTURE, BY WHICH WE MAY FORM AN IDEA OF HER PURITY OF SPIRIT.

I AM well able to declare the great purity of conscience possessed by this blessed servant of God, having frequently conferred with her on the state of her conscience, and having been her confessor-extraordinary for three years successively whilst I was rector of our college at Florence, besides which, Signor Francesco Benvenuti, then director and confessor of the monastery, and Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, the prioress, to whom she declared every action under obedience, related to me every circumstance of her life. But as the purity of her spirit and the minute and enlightened view which she took of her interior, dissecting, so to speak, her thoughts, words, actions, and affections, will be seen by an examen of conscience made by her in rapture on the 6th of April, 1592, I think

it well to insert it here, leaving the reader to make his own inference.

She began then by prostrating herself on the ground and repeating the Psalms, "Domine, quid multiplicati sunt," &c., and "Qui habitat." Having ended these, she said, "O my Jesus, what was my first thought to-day? I grieve that it was not of Thee, nor of offering myself to Thee, nor of honouring Thee, but I feared that I was too late in calling Thy spouses to sing Thy praises. Afterwards, O my Jesus, I went into the choir to offer myself to Thee, but did not yield myself to Thy will in and for all things. O most merciful God, what mercy could I hope from Thee, who did not commit myself entirely to Thee? O my Lord, show me mercy, though I deserve it not, but rather merit a thousand hells. Afterwards, when I went to Thy praises, I concerned myself more about those who failed in some ceremony or inclination, than in honouring Thee and offering Thee my praises in union of those of the blessed spirits. Great reason have I, O great God, to implore Thy mercy, since in what belongs to Thee, even Thy praises, I have committed so many imperfections. Then when I went to receive Thy Body and Blood, which I should have done with all possible fervour, I grieve that I had not the intention of doing so in honour of Thy passion, as Thou hast said, nor even of uniting my soul with Thee, but that I thought how I could tranquillize my heart. I listened indeed to the divine word, but thought more whether we were truly what Thou through Thy

priest (Christo) didst say to us, than of the love Thou didst bear towards me; therefore, O my God, I can only ask Thy mercy. When I went to receive Thy Blood in the Sacrament of penance, I thought more of what I should say to Thy priest (Christo) to quiet my heart, than of the benefit which Thou didst bestow in washing my soul in Thy blood, and I did not trust in Thee, to give me the grace which would quiet my heart. O my Lord, and what were the first words that I uttered? words of reproof," (she said this as having reproved a novice, being then school-mistress,) "and my speech, in which there was so little sweetness and kindness, caused the heart of that sister to be troubled; and, what was worse, I failed in charity, for when I saw that her heart was troubled, I did not seek to tranquillize it, that it might be united to Thee. Behold, O Lord, the fruit which I derive from my union with Thee, and the light which Thou dost impart to me, for which any one else would be more grateful; and I, miserable and unhappy that I am, derive no fruit at all from it, but want charity towards Thy spouses. Forgive me for the sake of Thy passion. Then when I went to speak to that creature," (she meant that she had gone to speak to one of her aunts at the grate, where she had been rapt in ecstasy,) "I grieve at having to confess a great hypocrisy, in appearing what I was not. Though I made a sign to Thy creatures, I did not deserve that they should understand me, because I made a show of keeping my soul united to Thee, and yet

Thou knowest how often it wandered from Thee. I had the appearance of a true religious, but Thou knowest what I am. I beg Thy mercy, O my God, for this great hypocrisy, and offer Thy Blood, shed with such love for me. If, O my Lord, Thou dost send me to hell, as I deserve, Thou mightest justly place me below Judas, since I have so much offended Thee. I then went to give my body its necessary food; but what intention had I of honouring Thee, since I did not offer to Thee the many poor creatures who perhaps had long been knocking at the doors for a morsel of bread, which, it may be, was not given them? and for me, a miserable wretch, without any labour, and, what is worse, without any merit of mine, all needful support has been provided by the community. And not only did I commit this offence against Thee, but that other of speaking so many words to that spouse of Thine, knowing that in that place such speaking was not permitted. Behold, O my Lord, I find that in all my works I have offended Thee! How then can I appear before Thee to ask Thy gifts and graces, to recommend Thy creatures to Thee, since I have so much offended Thee that I do not deserve that Thou shouldst show mercy to me? May that love which moved Thee to descend to earth and shed Thy blood for me, move Thee to show mercy to my soul. After this, when I did not go with Thy other spouses to sing Thy praises, it was entirely my own fault, for when that soul told me not to go, I instantly consented to remain. O my Jesus, had she asked

me to perform some act of charity I should not so willingly have said, 'Yes.' O my Lord, how could I hope to arrive at that place where I should love to praise Thee for ever with the blessed spirits, since I had failed to praise Thee with Thy spouses? I offer Thee Thy blood, through which I hope for mercy. And in that work which I did, what intention had I of honouring Thee, O my Lord, since I grieved more for the time which Thou by Thy gifts didst take from me," (she meant the time in which the Lord had rapt her in unconsciousness,) "than for having failed to offer my soul to Thee? I made a sign to Thy little virgins to keep silence, without considering that I was much more obliged to keep my soul united to Thee. Then when I had to invoke the Holy Ghost, it was with a mind so far from Thee, that I could not remember the manner in which I should do it, so that those who had been a shorter time in religion had more thought than I. Behold, O my Jesus, I have failed in every work; how then can I appear before Thy goodness, which I have so much offended? Again I offer Thee Thy blood, by which alone I can hope for pardon. And how much did I fail, O Lord, in that other work which I had to do, because I would not endure the fatigue of taking a few steps. I failed in that which I was bound to do, asking others to do me charity, whilst I failed in charity to my own soul. I took more care not to give myself a little fatigue, than of retaining Thy presence. In all my works, O my God, I find defects; but

Thou, not regarding so many offences, didst attract me to Thyself by Thy goodness, through which Thou didst impart such great light to me, that wert Thou to bestow it upon another soul Thou wouldst see more fruit than in poor, miserable, wretched me. I then went to refresh my body with food, not remembering the poor, who have no sustenance, and Thou, O my God, hast so largely provided for me. Again I offer Thy blood for all my offences against Thee. Alas, my Lord, darkness is now approaching, and I have performed no work without offending Thee; what then can I do? O my God, if I have so greatly offended Thee this day, I will not commit the last offence against Thee, which would be the not confiding in Thee and in Thy mercy. I well know, O Lord, that I deserve no pardon, but the blood which Thou hast shed for me leads me to hope in Thee that Thou wilt yet grant me pardon." Having made this examen she retired, still in rapture, to a private place in the monastery, and there gave herself a severe discipline. She then recovered from her rapture, having recommended all creatures to God, and offered the blood of Christ for them.

Besides this, she was wont to say very frequently, "If I thought that I could become a seraph, by speaking one word for any other end than the love of God, even though it should not be an offence against Him, I would never speak it." Moreover, if she perceived sometimes that she had begun some work from a human motive, she instantly left it imperfect,

nor would she afterwards finish it, till she could do so for the pure end of pleasing God. She was amazed if every gesture and movement, even the raising the eyes were not directed to God Himself, and said, "We do not walk with a pure intention, because we have not the love of God." Being once asked by a nun how this purity was to be acquired, she said, "If you seek not to do your own will, and choose rather to suffer than to enjoy, you will find that you have acted with a pure intention; for this way of suffering is safe, and very dear to God."

CHAPTER LII.

RULES FOR A HOLY LIFE, WHICH THE SAINT RECEIVED FROM JESUS WHEN IN ECSTASY.

On the 24th of August, 1593, after having received communion, she heard Jesus call her in these words: "Come, O My spouse, I am He who originated thee in My own Mind and placed thee in thy mother's womb, delighting in thee there." At this call she instantly rose and went through the monastery seeking her Jesus, with a countenance inflamed beyond measure with love.

In a little time she again heard herself called in this manner: "Come, for I am He who took thee out of thy mother's womb, and, being well pleased in thee, united Myself to thee." On this she went with increased fervour to seek Jesus; but the heavenly Voice did not cease, and called

the third time in these words: "Come, for I will give thee a rule, and put an end to thy passions for thy whole life, till I lead thee to the enjoyment and possession of Myself in the land of the living." On hearing these words she became motionless and absorbed in ecstasy, during which the Eternal Word gave her twenty rules, which she was to observe throughout her life, for her greater advancement in perfect virtue. These she uttered as follows, in the Person of the Eternal Word:

"I, the Spouse of thy soul and the Word of My Eternal Father, give thee a rule, in that same act of love in which I granted and made thee to be a partaker of the greatness of My purity. Beloved one of Me the Beloved, mark My rule and thine. Mine it is, in that I give it thee; it is thine, since thou must observe it.

"1. First I require of thee that in all thine acts, exterior and interior, thou shouldst ever regard that purity which I made known to thee, and that thou shouldst imagine all thy works and words to be the last.

"2. According to thy strength and grace thou shalt seek from me eyes as numerous as the souls which I shall entrust to thee.

"3. Although allowed to give a counsel or command, yet thou shalt not give it till thou hast referred it to Me, suspended on the cross.

"4. Thou shalt never reprove, nor mark a defect in any creature, unless thou hast first acknowledged thyself to be inferior to the person reproved.

"5. Let thy words be sincere, true, grave, and free from all flattery, and ever present Me as the Example which creatures must follow in all their works.

"6. When with thine equals, never allow playfulness to exceed gravity, nor gravity to exceed kindness and humility.

"7. Let all thy works be done with such gentleness and humility, that like a loadstone they may attract others to Me, and with such prudence as to be a rule to My members, that is, to the religious, and thy neighbours.

"8. Thirst like the hart for the waters, namely, for the exercise of charity towards My members by day and night, considering the weakness and weariness of thy body no more than the earth which is trodden underfoot.

"9. Strive, so far as I shall enable thee, to be food for the hungry, drink to the thirsty, raiment for the naked, a garden for the imprisoned, and a refreshment to the afflicted.

"10. Be prudent as a serpent with those whom I leave on the sea of the world, and simple as a dove with Mine elect, fearing the former as the face of a dragon, and loving the others as the temples of the Holy Ghost.

"11. Be the ruler of thy passions, asking that grace of Me, who am the Ruler of all creatures.

"12. Thou shalt condescend to all My creatures, as I with infinite charity condescended when on earth, having always in My ears that sentence of My apostle, 'Quis infirmatur, et ego non infirmor?'

"13. Thou shalt never deprive any creature of that which thou art permitted to give, when requested to give it. Nor shalt thou deprive any creature of what is allowed her, till thou hast first remembered that I am the Searcher of hearts, who will judge thee with power and majesty.

"14. Thou shalt regard thy rule and its constitutions, as I would have thee regard Myself, seeking to engrave on every heart a zeal for her vocation, and for the order to which I have called thee.

"15. Thou shalt greatly desire to be subject to all, and feel a horror of being preferred to the least.

"16. Thou shalt place thy refreshment, rest, and consolation in nothing but contempt and abjection.

"17. On this day thou shalt cease to make thy defects and My designs known to any one but to those whom I have given thee, and my priest (Christo.)

"18. Thou shalt make a continual oblation of all thy desires and works, in union with My members in Me.

"19. From that hour in which I left My pure Mother, (that is, from the twenty-second hour,) till thou dost receive Me, thou shalt make a continual offering of thyself and of all creatures to My Eternal Father. Thus shalt thou prepare to receive Me sacramentally, and by day and night thou shalt visit my Body and Blood thirty-three times.

"20. The last thing shall be that in all the works, exterior and interior, which I permit thee to practise, thou shalt always be transformed into Me."

Here she remained for some time silent, and then continued in the Person of the Word:

"This is the rule which the Beloved of thy soul has given thee in the act of love. Thou shalt therefore keep it, laying to heart all that it contains, excepting when charity and obedience shall prevent thy visiting My Body and Blood." Here she recovered from her rapture. How well she observed these rules, will be shown as we proceed with her Life.

CHAPTER LIII.

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE WHICH SHE DAILY PERFORMED, WITH AN OBLATION OF HERSELF TO GOD.

The ardent desire of St. Mary Madaglene to excite in herself an increase of divine love, and to advance in religious perfection, led her to compose and write down a spiritual exercise, which she every morning recited to the Divine Majesty with indescribable fervour, and as the reader may derive no small profit from it, I have thought fit to note it here, with the same simplicity as that with which she wrote it.

"First, after signing yourself with the sign of the cross, say, 'Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas,' &c. Then make an examination of conscience,

offering the Blood of the Word. Afterwards adore the Most Holy Trinity, first adoring the Eternal Father, confessing Him to be God, and by this confession offering Him your life and your blood. Then, adoring the Eternal Word and the Holy Spirit, do the same, beseeching each of the Three Divine Persons to accomplish their sacred will in thee. Afterwards, adore the Word made Man, confessing Him to be all God and all Man, and offering to give your life for this confession and truth. Adore then the Unity of the Most Holy Trinity, by an act of reverence, making the same offer of yourself. Then, with the greatest possible simplicity and purity of affection, renew your profession, promising a perfect observance of your rule and constitutions. Consecrate yourself then to the Most Holy Trinity, making a perfect holocaust of yourself, committing all your thoughts, intentions, words, and works, interior and exterior, to the purity of God, beseeching Him to accomplish perfectly in you that divine and loving will by which He created you, and called you into the perfect state of religion.

"Then reflecting, acknowledge yourself to be nothing, and afterwards, raising your mind to God, rejoice in His infinite perfections, and that He is the Inscrutable One who can neither be understood nor comprehended by any creature. Rejoice that all creatures in earth or heaven, all beings, give Him glory, and honour, and praise. Delight in His infinity and greatness, compared with which all the power of creatures

is as nothing, and to the utmost of your power rejoice that He is God. Knowing Him to be the Supreme Good, infinitely amiable in Himself, desire to love Him with the perfection with which He is loved by all the blessed, and that with which all creatures love, have loved, and will with the blessed spirits love Him for all eternity. Desire to love Him even with that perfection with which He loves, has loved, and throughout all eternity will love Himself, thanking His Divine Majesty that by loving Himself He discharges our debt to Him.

"Again adoring the Most Holy Trinity, offer Him all His divine perfections; then the perfections, plenitude of grace and merits of the Word made Man; those of the Virgin Mary, of all the blessed, and also of all the elect, desiring to be able to suffer and do all which they suffered and performed, and all which throughout eternity will be suffered and performed by all creatures, to His honour and glory, desiring also throughout your life, but especially on this day, to be able to exalt, praise, magnify, and honour Him as He is exalted, praised, magnified, and honoured by all creatures, and all the blessed together, and by Himself in the act of love.

"Again adoring the Most Holy Trinity, with the most intense love of which you are capable, thank the Divine Majesty for all the good which He enjoys; congratulate Him on it, and rejoice in it. In the same manner, thank Him for the glory conferred on the Humanity of the Word,

for that conferred on the person of Mary, for that enjoyed by the blessed, and prepared for the elect, and also thank Him for all the blessings, graces, and communications which He has granted or will grant through all eternity. Then thank Him for having created you in His own image and likeness, redeemed you by the blood of His only-begotten Son, espoused and consecrated you to Himself, and that He daily gives Himself to you. Thank Him also for all the graces which He continually imparts to you, considering them in Him, and rejoicing, not in being enriched by such gifts and graces, but because they give you more strength to honour, love, and serve Him. Offer the Word made Man to His Eternal Father, in thanksgiving for all His mercies.

"Here excite your spirit to fervour, desiring to unite yourself with this most lovely God, whom you have known and do know to be so great and immense; and believing in lively faith that in His infinite goodness and liberality He will unite Himself to the creature, shrink into yourself, knowing your own baseness. Turn then to the Eternal Father, and beseech Him to give you His Divine Word, and when He has given Him to you, shut up yourself in His heart, and resign yourself to Him, in union with that resignation of His soul which He (the Word) made when expiring on the cross. Clothed with the Word, resign your will into the hands of the Eternal Father, saying, "Fiat voluntas tua," in union with the resignation of the Word in

the garden; then entreat Him to confirm you in His divine will, offering yourself to Him as a daughter. Ask then of the Word love, offering yourself as His spouse, and of the Holy Ghost humility, offering yourself as His disciple.

"This done, offer the Word and yourself in Him to the Eternal Father with all His divine perfections, His soul and humanity, His thoughts, words, and actions, together with His Passion as the bundle of myrrh and His precious Blood, intending to make this offering in the heart of the Word, in union with one of those offerings which He made when on earth for us. Make this offer for the whole Church militant, triumphant, and suffering; desiring to offer this Victim with the greatest love which has been offered or may be offered by all creatures. And as the Eternal Father takes great pleasure in this offering, rest in that pleasure, and there take the cross, together with the Word, with a resolution to follow Him even unto death. Then make the following protests to your God, Father, Spouse, and Teacher:

"1. Protest that you will choose the deepest humility.

"2. That you will adore and confess the unity of the Most Holy Trinity, for those who do not adore it.

"3. That you will always and in all things exalt poverty.

"4. That you will show most favour to the afflicted and suffering.

"5. That you will build all your works, exterior and interior, in the wounds of Christ.

"6. That you will be a refuge of the imperfections committed in the dwelling of Mary.

"7. That you will be as far removed from self, and things earthly, as heaven is from earth.

"8. That you will rejoice in contempt and confusion, as God rejoices in Himself.

"9. That you will rejoice in the Being of God, and in poverty of spirit, and rather suffer extreme loss than prevent your neighbour from enjoying God.

"10. To condole with God on the offences done to His Divine Majesty.

"This exercise with God being ended, go to the Most Holy Virgin, and adore her with befitting adoration; then entreat her to make you as well as herself, the mother, daughter, and spouse of God. His mother, by the conformity of your will to that of God; His daughter, by pure undeviating love; His spouse, by fidelity, and the performance of the promises made to Him. You shall then offer her her habitation," (she meant the monastery,) "and entreat her to guard it with the love with which she guarded the Incarnate Word and her own virginity, and at the close make this protest to her, 'O my most pure and most amiable mother, I protest to thee that I would rather be in hell than not always be zealous for strict observance and perfection in myself and all thy habitation, that is, in all thy daughters who are here at present,

or shall be here in future.' Then recite the Angelical Salutation three times, in any place at your option. Then offer yourself to your Angel-guardian, entreating him always to preserve you, and protesting that you will correspond with his internal operations and divine illuminations. Make another protest to your patron saints, and all the heavenly Jerusalem, to honour and revere their feasts and relics, and above all, to imitate them in true and saintly virtues."

The holy mother being in her wonted ecstasy, the Lord God caused her to understand, that in every religious order five petitions ought to be made to His Divine Majesty, that the true observance might always flourish, and holy religious rule never fall from its first institution. Her mind being thus illuminated, she began her colloquy with this tender exclamation: "O Jesus, my sweet Spouse, how do I see the ancient beauty of religious observance deformed and defaced in this our day! How relaxed are those three bands by which the religious soul unites herself to Thee! Ah, what failures in obedience! what an abhorrence of poverty! how little prized is the fair jewel of chastity! In Thy goodness, O my God, Thou hast caused me to know five petitions, which must be made to Thee for true observance in all religious orders.

"1. That charity and union may be always maintained with Thee, O my God, and with our neighbour.

"2. That the vow of holy obedience may be always perfectly observed.

"3. That Thou, O my God, wouldst grant to every community a superior who, like David, shall be according to Thine own heart, that the simple life of holy observance may never fail.

"4. That the vow of holy poverty may be always maintained in rigorous perfection.

"5. That this grace, O my sweet Spouse, may be continually asked, that all those religious who may come to serve Thee may have perfect light and knowledge of the importance of an entire renunciation of their own will, and of observing the most minute point of holy rule.

"O my Lord, how needful is it that these petitions should be offered to Thee! How needful is it that Thou shouldst bestow these graces on Thy holy habitations, that Thy divine service may be ever maintained in vigour! But if they be not asked of Thee with pure love and with panting anxiety, Thou wilt not grant them. No, no. I will present to Thee these petitions, O my God, in the name of Jesus, that Thou mayest communicate these precious gifts to the souls which are Thine own.....But, alas! there are no dispositions in these hearts to receive them, so that there is an impediment to the communication of every gift. When Thou wouldst infuse obedience, ah, Thou art hindered by disbelief of the truth that God speaks and works in superiors. Human respect prevents the election of superiors according to God's own heart, and having the illumination of the Holy Ghost. Sensuality opposes the observance of poverty. O, if before entering into religion they would but think

of that to which a religious binds himself, and of the importance of fulfilling his promise, how well would they observe self-abnegation and strict rule!"

Having thus spoken, with glowing feeling and religious zeal, she regained her consciousness, and the rapture ceased.

CHAPTER LIV.

OF HER MOST DEEP HUMILITY.

Amongst the many Christian virtues which won for this holy virgin the favour of God and man, one was that profound humility with which she ever conducted herself towards God and all creatures, and which she manifested in her words, actions, and general deportment. She thought most meanly of herself, always regarding herself as the lowest, most abject, and most ignorant person in the monastery, and as the greatest sinner in the world, so that she expressed her astonishment that God, the angels, and the saints, could endure her on the earth. In this low opinion of herself she would say, that for her part, she wondered that the earth did not open and swallow her up alive, and she said often to her companions, "What would you say, were you to see the earth open and swallow me up?" and this she said, not in form, but with the most true feelings of humility. Every time that she saw the mother-prioress, she trembled for

fear that she should be driven out of the monastery, and was in terror lest she should say, "Depart from this holy place, for thou art ununworthy to be the companion of these spouses of Christ;" and whenever she was called by the superior, as soon as she reached her, she threw herself on her knees, expecting to be reproved and corrected for her faults. She was greatly afraid to go into the choir to recite the divine office with the others, thinking herself unworthy to stand in the Divine Presence, and praise God in company with those mothers and sisters, whom she regarded all as saints, praising and exalting the virtues both of the living and the dead, so as to give a high idea of their merits. Viewing herself in comparison with them, she humbled herself as wicked and full of faults and sins, always aggravating her failings, nor was there a fault of which she did not believe herself to be guilty, and on that account thought herself unworthy to appear among the rest. On entering the choir, she trembled, saying, "This is a great miracle, that I should appear before such great purity," and sometimes she seemed to hear a voice, saying, "Let the wicked woman be removed from the company of the saints, for her iniquity prevents the prayers of the others from ascending as incense in the presence of God." She stood in the choir most submissively, and with her eyes cast down, thinking that the others must remember her faults and know her unworthiness. Once, in a rapture, the Lord showed her all the faults and sins which she

had committed during her whole life, however slight they might have been, on which she broke into great lamentation, saying, "I would willingly have gone to hell, if I could never have offended God." She acknowledged her obligation to the sisters who had received her, and was seen privately to kiss the ground on which their feet had trodden. When she saw any fault in them, she would excuse it, or would say, "I should have done worse." When asked to pray for any sinner, she said, "I pray for others, God grant I may not be worse than they." At another time she would humbly say, "Were God to withdraw His hand from me, there is no sin, however grievous and enormous, into which I should not fall." She would kiss the walls of the monastery, saying, "Had I remained outside these walls in the world, I should have committed so many abominations, that I should have died by the hands of the executioner, so I have reason to kiss them." She magnified her faults to such a degree, that those who did not know her would have thought her a bad and relaxed nun. In 1602, a noble young lady of about nineteen or twenty was clothed in the monastery, and as she was an excellent, prudent, and very judicious girl, she soon discovered the singular goodness, sanctity, and perfection of her mistress, whom she greatly loved and esteemed. The saint, perceiving this, watched for an opportunity of making her alter her opinion, and leading her to regard her as sinful and imperfect. She therefore asked leave of the mother-prioress to

show this novice, for her own confusion, what her temptations had been during her five years of probation, but the prioress at that time refused to grant her request. Some days after, urged by the same desire, she made the same request to the father-director, who granted it. Finding her novice then in a retired place, she knelt before her with profound humility, breaking out into great lamentation with sobs and sighs, and began to speak to her as follows: "Sister, I wish you to know what a mistress you have, that you may have the more merit in obeying me, which my office obliges you to do, let me be what I will; I therefore beseech you to do so, without regard to what I am about to tell you. Know then, that I have been the scandal and the disturbance of this holy community;" and she then began to relate as grievous sins all the great temptations which she had endured. For example, having been tempted to gluttony, she declared that she had been a glutton at the time when she had the reputation of fasting on bread and water; having been tempted to take eatables, she called herself a thief, and so of the other temptations to infidelity, pride, sensuality, to leave the community, to throw off the habit, to despair; and whilst speaking of them, she wept most bitterly, as though they had not been temptations, but sins actually committed, adding, "Had I been in the world, I should certainly have ended my life by the hands of justice, for all the crimes which I have committed; or had I been in another monastery,

where charity did not reign so completely as here, I should have been imprisoned for life. O how am I obliged to these holy mothers and sisters! How patiently have they borne with and pitied me! O what obligations am I under to every one of them! O what mercy I have received!" As on some occasions she had not revealed the truth, but had virtuously concealed it, she called herself a liar and a deceiver, repeating many times, "See, sisters, what a mistress you have, and pray to God for me that He may show me mercy, and not send me to hell, which I know myself to have deserved!" and she remained trembling and sad as though she had committed the greatest abominations in the world. The novice admired this act, and believed that if she had till then been a great sinner, God, for this noble act, would have made her a great saint; for so great was her emotion that she moved the novice to weep with her. The latter was at first disturbed, and hearing the things which she related so vividly, represented as grievous sins, almost believed them to be true, and thought that the saint had perhaps been brought from those fearful sins into the great sanctity in which she then knew her to be. But as God was pleased to show the novice that this was nothing but an excess of humility, she being very uneasy, was inspired to go into the choir before the blessed Sacrament, which she did, saying, "O Lord, let this sister have been what she may, I am sure that she is now a great servant of the Divine Majesty, and as

such I will always regard and receive her." In saying this, she felt all her disquiet removed, and as though a veil had been taken from her eyes, she learned that her mistress, in order to appear a great sinner in her eyes, had humbled herself in this manner.

She was now very easy on the subject, and speaking of it afterwards to the other mothers of the monastery, they assured her that it was very true that the saint had had these temptations, but that she had gloriously overcome them all, which so greatly increased her esteem and reverence for such a mother, that from that time whenever she saw her, she revered her as something sacred. The holy mother, thinking that she had convinced the novice, often said to her, "Sister, remember me. You know my necessity." And when any fault of which she had not told her came to her mind, she instantly went and told them to her in an act of humiliation. Often too, when standing near her at work, touched with vehement sorrow for her sins, she would say, "O sister, I have committed so many grievous sins, pray God to have mercy on me: do me this charity." The novice, who had always dissembled as though she believed all, was once desirous of convicting her, and so replied, "To offend God, we must have the will to do so." To which she answered without hesitation, "O, no! For I have always had a heart which desired to honour God, though I have always offended Him. I have always loved Jesus, because He has given me every blessing,"

and thus she was compelled to confess what she had been in reality.

Another time she confessed the sin of having eaten without permission, accusing herself of being sensual and a glutton ; and this was afterwards found to be because she one day had been dividing a conserve of pine-kernels amongst the others, when from one of the divided parts two kernels had fallen, which she had put into her mouth and had eaten. This she considered a very grievous fault. If any one spoke of breaches of the rule, the good mother declared that she had committed them all in the highest degree. Yet it is most true that when she once besought a sister, if she loved her, to tell her all the failings which she might observe in her, the sister, having for a long time watched her in the refectory, and in all places and exercises, could never perceive the slightest fault in her, nor hear one idle (by which I mean one faulty) word from her mouth. On the contrary, she produced devotion in all who looked on her, inciting all to virtue.

She often on her knees besought the sisters to tell her her failings, and when sometimes the nuns, to satisfy her desire, said that she had such and such a fault, she gave full credit to all they said, though it was not true, and humbled herself greatly, without making any excuse, feeling sure that she had that fault, but could not see it for want of light. So great a sinner did she always consider herself, that when she was dying, after having received the holy oil,

she said that she firmly believed that God was removing her from the world, that He might not have to send a chastisement for her sins, and that she should not wonder at any great punishment which God should send on the world for her sins. One of her daughters having asked her how she had arrived at so low an opinion of herself, when God had endowed her with such rare gifts, she replied, "I wonder at your stupidity in this. Know that if God had not favoured me with particular gifts, and in this way almost held me back, I should have plunged into the greatest offences which can be committed against His Divine Majesty. He has not done this to you, because you obey His voice, and can serve Him without these particular gifts, and I am therefore more wretched than all of you." When she said that she feared that the earth would swallow her up, on being asked by the mothers if that were her real feeling, she replied, "I feel, and have cause to feel it, because if I have not committed sins which would deprive me of the grace of God, it is because God has restrained me, and removed the occasions; and if others had had the same blessings and opportunities of doing good which I have had, they would not have offended Him, but, on the contrary, would have honoured Him more than I."

Having said this, she knelt and confessed these her sins, accusing herself with great humility of her past temptations, adding at the end, "See what cause I have for such a feeling."

She would sometimes entreat some novice to tell her her faults, and would then kneel and kiss her feet, begging her to tread on her mouth, and to give her a discipline, and sometimes gave her an obedience so to do, imposing silence on her.

It happened many times that she caused her novices to give her the discipline, saying the while, "Give it me harder; the devil is laughing!" One night she called a lay-sister, saying, "Come, you have an obedience to perform for Jesus!" She then made her give her half an hour's discipline with an iron chain, reminding her all the time to strike hard.

Once, when mistress of the juniors, she prostrated herself on the ground, and desired each of them to give her a discipline on the mouth with her shoe, at which the good juniors were moved to tears, being confounded at her great humility. She every day went to humble herself and confess her faults to one of her novices, and then caused her to give her a penance. And for nine successive years, she was wont to humble herself daily to one of her companions, accusing herself of those actions which appeared to her to be faulty, though the sister declared she could see no fault in them; and then asked her pardon, begging her to give her a penance; and in particular she told her that she had many temptations, and that therefore if she loved and would help her, she must give her a discipline, and use mortifying expressions in speaking to her, and till her death she always wished to

have some one to whom she could accuse herself of her faults, and who should counsel and humble her. When she heard any one say, "The crucifix is enough for me," she would say, "I find it difficult to go to the crucifix, without the medium of humiliation before creatures." Being once asked by a sister whether so many graces received from God had never given her an occasion for vain-glory, she replied, "Do you not know that no one can derive glory from what is not his own? How then would you have me feel any vain-glory in the favours derived from God, since they are all His?" Another time Sister Maria Pacifica, when reading over to her some raptures and intelligences which she had written, to see if there were any error in them, asked her if in these things she felt any movement of pride, when she said, "I feel what you have read to me, as though you had read it from any other book, I only know that I had those feelings and intelligences which you have been reading." Another time some sheets of paper falling into her hands, in which some particulars of her life had been written, she burned them, and being severely reproved by the mother-prioress, she humbled herself, asking pardon, not merely of her but of the writer, and on being asked why she had destroyed the papers, and if it were on account of any feeling of pride or vain glory, she answered that she had not acted from any such feeling, but that not being bound by obedience, it appeared to her to be her duty to burn them, and she named the example of another

spiritual person, who had done the same: but the father-confessor hearing of this, laid an obedience on her to do so no more, and she consequently never touched these papers again. Not only did she never seek any office in the community, but esteemed herself unworthy to fill any, wept when they were assigned to her, and taught humility by word and example. She one day asked one of her novices, if she would willingly be a nun without having a vote in the chapter, the latter said no, for she should like to be like the other nuns. The holy mother replied, "I should willingly be mean and abject, and would give my place and vote to any one, whom I thought would use it better than I." She concealed her virtues, saying, all she did was natural, and that there was no virtue in it, and she delighted in those saints, who, being in convents and communities, had either concealed themselves, or caused others to think them mad, and would have rejoiced to have been able to imitate them, and not only in her natural state, but even in rapture. She often asked of God the grace of being hidden from every creature, and of not disclosing His gifts, and had not God manifested them in an especial manner, no one would have known anything of her gifts or of her interior. She was greatly distressed at being seen in rapture, therefore just as she was about to recover her consciousness, the mother-prioress was particularly careful to dismiss the nuns, lest she should be ashamed and annoyed. When performing some

act of virtue with her novices, she usually obliged them not to mention it. She desired not to know future events, and said to God in rapture, "O Lord, retain them in Thyself, and let me not know them," and though God revealed them to her, she never appeared to know them when conversing with seculars. At the time of her going bare-footed, if girls came to the monastery on trial, she put on a pair of shoes without soles, that she might not be seen with bare feet. When told by the prioress to make the sign of the cross over a sick person, or if ordered by her to pray for the affairs of the house or for those without, she almost constantly called some companion either to perform the action or to unite in prayer with her, that any miracle which might follow might be attributed to her. So mean was her opinion of herself, that she seemed never to have performed any action well, therefore at the end of all her actions, she turned to some one present, even to the novices, when there were no others, saying, "Do you think, sisters, that I have done it well, pray tell me!" If they replied, that there might be some imperfection, she instantly believed them, yielded, and bowed her head as one guilty, and this she did when the actions were most praiseworthy and perfect, which the novices well knew them to be; but to try her, or to enjoy her humility, they sometimes answered her in that way.

The devil could not endure the humility which led her always to ask counsel of others. Once

whilst going through the exercises of St. Ignatius, she asked some counsel of another nun concerning the meditation which they were making on the prayer of Christ in the garden. Immediately they heard such a noise and clatter above the ceiling of the room, that the nun thought there was not a tile left entire on the roof, and exclaimed in terror, "O Sister Magdalene, what is this?" She began to laugh, and replied, "What do you think it is?" The nun afterwards saw that not a tile had been moved, but that the devil had made the noise, provoked by the great humility of the saint.

When reproving a novice for a fault which was immediately amended with confession of error, the good mother directly said, "I should have done worse than you, do not be alarmed;" or else showed her that she herself had this or a greater fault. If she saw any one performing an act of virtue, she would humble herself and say, "I should not have known how to do that." Through her great zeal for the glory of God, she sometimes reproved faults sharply, and desired that they should be punished by the superiors; but if only a lay-sister said, "Mother, perhaps that severity will not do good," she would immediately recollect and humble herself as if before a superior, saying, "I have erred," and would be calmed at once.

She avoided as much as possible all intercourse with distinguished personages, saying that she was unworthy to be named on the earth, much more to be known by such persons. One

day the Duchess of Bracciano having come to speak to her at the grate, on the message being brought her she said, "O if the Duchess of Bracciano knew that Sister Mary Magdalene is the abomination of the monastery, she would be careful not to name her, much more to have her called." Being told another time that she must go to the grate, for her Most Serene Highness the Duchess of Mantua was come to speak to her, she wept so much as to be quite inconsolable, saying, "I do not know why I should have to speak to such persons, who am only a nun like the rest." At another time the Most Serene Princess Maria de' Medici, before she became Queen of France, wrote her a letter, begging some counsel and spiritual instructions, on reading which the saint was greatly afflicted even to weeping; and when she saw that the prioress wished her to satisfy the princess, she said, "Mother-prioress, you wish me to be thought what I am not, and to go to hell for my pride, and when I shall be in hell, these great people will not pull me out." As the princess in her letter expressed a wish to come and see her, she begged her not to do so, assuring her of her prayers.

When this princess subsequently became Queen of France, on the day previous to her leaving Florence, she was resolved at all events to see the saint, who being unable to avoid the visit, sent to request that she would come alone, which she did, for, as has been said, she entered the monastery unattended.

The delight of the good mother was to be humble, and to converse with poor mean people, and she sought and embraced the worst things in the house, in food, clothing, offices, and exercises, believing herself to deserve nothing better. She often ate the fragments which were left on the trenchers at table, and used the trencher of one who was suffering under a loathsome sickness. She dressed poorly, as has been said, and willingly occupied herself with the work of the kitchen, and in helping the cook performed the meanest offices, asking pardon for her mistakes when she had done.

It was for the advantage of the monastery that she should serve in the kitchen frequently, for she caused the provisions to multiply, and the monastery being at that time very poor, they had not always sufficient provision for all the community. The lay-sister who was cook used frequently to betake herself to Sister Mary Magdalene, begging her to ask of Jesus an increase of the provisions, which she declared to be insufficient. She in reply told the cook that she must trust in God, and the latter immediately conceiving a good hope, the provision multiplied so much as to be not only enough, but more than enough. One day in the Lent of the year 1587, or '88, there was nothing for dinner in the monastery, and the weather being bad they could not send out to procure any thing. There were only in the house as many herrings as would serve the fourth part of the nuns. The procuratrix had then recourse to

the prayers of St. Mary Magdalene, who, that she might have a companion, called the cook, saying, "Let each of us say a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria to her Angel-guardian, that they may inspire Sr. Lapo del Tovaglia, the father of Sister Maria Pacifica, to send us as many herrings as are needed." They did so, and an hour had scarcely passed when, notwithstanding the bad weather, a messenger arrived from Sr. Lapo, bringing them a basket of herrings as a present, and so the want was supplied.

Many other things might be written concerning her great humility, but it is enough for me to say that she was a mirror of humility and self-contempt, imparting compunction and devotion to all who looked on her. She left in writing some acts of humiliation, which were taught her in rapture, and in which she was wont to exercise herself. They are as follows:

"1. Go to the choir of the Holy Angels, and pray them to offer before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity the blood of the Word made Man; asking of them true humility of spirit, and at the same time regard thyself, O my soul, as resembling the devils in pride and ingratitude.

"2. Go to the choir of the Archangels, and beseech them as above; and thirsting, O my soul, for high purity, ask it of them, and at the same time humble thyself, esteeming thyself unworthy of the aureola of virginity, or of ability to serve God with purity.

"3. Go to the choir of the Principalities, be-

seeching them to offer the blood of the Word made Man to the Eternal Father, and asking of them most perfect obedience and subjection to the divine will, and to the will of every creature for the love of the Creator. Endeavour to attain this humiliation of knowing thyself to be unworthy, that any obedience should at any time be laid on thee, or to be ever numbered amongst the truly obedient.

"4. Go to the choir of the Powers, beseeching them to offer the blood as before; and do thou, O my soul, who art become the slave of sensual appetites, ask the grace to be able to restrain them all, and as far as thou canst, humble thyself as unworthy to dwell in this holy community, or to unite thy praises with those of the spouses of Jesus. And what more? To listen to them willingly, though they should address thee in words of injury and shame.

"5. Go to the choir of the Virtues, beseeching them as above; and do thou, O my soul, who art destitute of every virtue, ask of them firmness, stability, and constancy in well-doing, and so humble thyself as to feel thyself unworthy of every grace and gift of Heaven, or of being able to assist thy neighbour on earth by works of charity, or of being partaker of the blessings of all believers.

"6. Go to the choir of the Dominations, beseeching them as above; and do thou, O my soul, whilst asking of them perfect dominion over all thine interior passions and earthly affections, humble thyself, esteeming thyself unworthy to

be the possessor of poverty of spirit, or any other virtue.

"7. Ask of the Thrones, that approaching the loving arms of the Word made Man, they may offer thee there; and do thou, O my soul, so abase thyself as to esteem thyself unworthy, as in truth thou art, of the union which thou dost so often make with thy Spouse through the most holy Sacrament, who comes with such love to seat Himself in the centre of thine heart.

"8. Go to the choir of the Cherubim, who will offer thee to the pure eyes of the Word made Man; and do thou, O my soul, continuing thy humiliations, ask of them light to know the Divine will respecting thyself, the graces which thou dost every moment receive from the Lord, and thy bad correspondence with them; esteeming thyself unworthy of all light of heavenly inspirations, or of preservation through the Divine mercy, and most worthy, for thy little correspondence with the Divine light, to be abandoned by God and left in thy darkness and errors.

"9. Go to the choir of the Seraphim, that they may offer thee to the most sweet, most pitiful, and most loving heart of the Word made Man; and do thou, O my soul, whilst asking of them the purity of Divine love and the glowing flames of charity in which they burn continually, continue thine exercise, and make an effort to arrive at the humiliation of knowing thyself to be unworthy that God should have hitherto borne with and preserved thee, without casting

thee into the flames of hell for the coldness and frost of thine heart in the midst of such flames, and shrinking into the centre of thine own baseness and meanness, know that amongst all creatures, thou through thine ingratitude art unworthy of that divine care, providence, and love which God extends to all His creatures; and abhorring thyself as a thing incredibly vile and abominable, ask Him through these blessed loving spirits, to be like Isaias, purified on earth by the flame of tribulation, that all the dross of thy faults may be removed from thy soul, so that it may be no longer altogether unworthy of that most pure love.

CHAPTER LV.

OF THE VIRTUE AND VOW OF OBEDIENCE.

Man has three kinds of natural advantages, of which the religious in his profession divests himself for the love of God: exterior goods, which he renounces by the vow of poverty; bodily enjoyments, which he rejects by the vow of chastity; and the wealth of the soul, over which the will rules and sways the sceptre, man using it like all his other possessions at his pleasure, and of this he deprives himself by the vow of obedience. Now, the wealth of the soul being greater than exterior or bodily possessions, obedience, by which a man deprives himself of this, is the highest of all the moral virtues. In this

virtue St. Mary Magdalene was distinguished, for not only did she fully obey the precepts of the law, the Church, and the order, never transgressing one of them; but even when a child in her father's house, she was ever most obedient to all the commands of her parents. When placed for education in the monastery of St. John, she never presumed to contradict the will of the reverend mothers in whose charge she was placed, but sought with all readiness to execute the signs, not to say the orders, which were given her, to the great admiration of the other girls.

But in the community, more than any where else, she discovered the perfection of her obedience; for she never considered the person of the superior who commanded her, but in her recognized God and Jesus Christ, nor did she obey on any other motive, but that she regarded the command as divine, and imposed on her by the authority of God; so that she would as willingly have obeyed the cook, whilst she was her superior in the kitchen, as the prioress, because in her she regarded the person of Christ, for the love of whom she obeyed those who had received authority from Him as the vicars of Christ. Therefore she never sought either openly or covertly to draw the will of her superiors to her own, but on the contrary endeavoured to submit her own will and judgment to that of the superior, trying first to think, judge, and feel, as the superior thought, judged, and felt; and then bending her will to

that of the superior, she obeyed with readiness and alacrity without expostulation, and used to say that she never seemed to herself to have obeyed, unless she had first captivated her judgment to regard the order as good, however repugnant it might be to herself.

But the strength of this virtue in her may be gathered from this, that when God in rapture ordered her to do anything, she would not do it without the permission of her superiors, as was the case when God commanded her to live only on bread and water, and her superiors for a trial forbade her to do so, when she cheerfully obeyed, till afterwards, being more enlightened, they gave her permission to do it. And when she obeyed the command of God, to go barefoot and wear nothing but a ragged tunic, yet, on being ordered by her superiors to put on her shoes, she did so, though her feet became so painful and inflamed, that for many days she was compelled to drag herself on the ground on her hands and knees. Then she said to her God in rapture, "O Lord, when I am with Thee, I will obey Thee; when I am with them, I will obey them," and God, as has been said, declared Himself pleased by her obedience. This holy virtue was so impressed on her heart, that even when alienated from her senses and rapt in ecstasy, she remembered and practised it. Signor Francesco Benvenuti, the director and confessor of the monastery, having heard that in a rapture she had sprung on the cornice of the choir, as has been related, fearing lest she should fall,

ordered her to do so no more, but if she wished to ascend, to use a ladder. One day in rapture she wished to go up to the crucifix, as she had been wont to do. She drew back and looked fixedly at the crucifix from below, remained a little time, and then said, "O Word, I must fetch the instrument," and still in rapture she went to take a ladder, and ascended by that, thus showing that even in rapture she remembered obedience. In like manner Cardinal Alessandro Medici, Archbishop of Florence, (afterwards Pope Leo XI.) having visited the monastery on the 30th of September, 1586, in order to be present at the election of a prioress, found on examination, that during fifteen days she had only eaten three times, and ordered her never to pass twenty-four hours without food. Six years after, on Holy Thursday, 1592, she had a rapture relative to the Passion, which began on Thursday at the eighteenth hour; she remained in this rapture during the whole of the following night, and as she approached the termination of the twenty-four hours, that is, the eighteenth hour on Friday, she uttered these words, "O Word, for the sake of obedience, Thou dost abridge the time," and a little before the eighteenth hour she recovered from her rapture, and by taking a little bread and water, performed the obedience imposed on her by the prelate. Nor did she only when in rapture obey the commands laid on her in her natural state, but also those given in rapture itself. The prioress would often call her when she was in rapture, and order her to do

various things, and on hearing her voice she would instantly recover her senses, and perform the obedience, and she would often do this whilst still in rapture. Once, on Assumption, as she was rapt in high contemplation, the prioress called her, and told her to serve at table, which she did, instantly recovering her senses, though in serving she was so much abstracted, that at every step it seemed as though she would fall into rapture, which she did immediately after dinner. I myself had her once called to me under obedience when in rapture, when she directly came to me at the grate. So greatly did this holy mother esteem the merit of obedience, that she was not contented to be subject to her superiors alone, but also submitted herself to her equals and companions, one of whom was Sister Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia, to whom she so subjected herself, as to ask her permission for almost everything she wished to do, even things necessary, or commanded by the rule; and in her absence she did the same to others, and many times subjected herself to her own subjects, never beginning any work without the impulse of obedience, and regarding that day as almost lost in which she had not submitted her will to some one, which was her reason for submitting to inferiors when she could find no others. When ill, and from her love of suffering being unwilling to take some medicine or delicate food, which would in some measure have relieved her, if told to take it in obedience, she would instantly do so with

all readiness. She preferred the most trivial and mean actions performed in obedience, to those of great perfection, such as contemplation, &c., voluntarily performed; and for the same reason, she esteemed more highly life in community than the eremitical in solitude, saying, that though there is great perfection in the solitary and anchoretical state, she would nevertheless have always preferred a life in community, since that always presents an opportunity of living death, by the destruction of self, through the mortification of the will.

She was also most anxious that the other sisters should esteem the virtue of obedience, and exhorted them to the practice of it with great fervour, especially her subjects, showing them the greatness of this virtue, and how pleasing it is to God, and teaching them by word and action how to acquire it. She said to one of them, "If you wish in a short time to acquire much hidden virtue, never omit this good and salutary exercise of obedience, for I hold it to be most efficacious in giving death to self, and life to the soul." Another time she said that obedience seeks to have no will of its own in anything, however holy, but to reverence superiors, to become blind, and to obey simply equals and inferiors as well as superiors; that unwillingness to obey is self-love, when superiors forbid us to practise austerities and spontaneous penance. In short, she said that the virtue which exalted Christ was obedience, for He obeyed even to the death of the cross. We read of various instructions,

which she gave on the resignation of our own will to that of God and superiors, and in particular the following:

"1. The soul can in some measure correspond with the great obligation which she owes to God, by making a perfect holocaust of herself to the Divine Majesty, abandoning herself freely to His Divine Will, whether He wills her to be in heaven, on earth, or even in hell, (though God can never will that for a just soul,) and in all things feeling a supreme satisfaction, so that she sees that most high will of God fulfilled in herself.

"2. The soul which daily receives the most Holy Sacrament, should be so indifferent and resigned to the will of God in obedience, as to have no choice in any thing."

At another time the good mother said, "If a soul wishes to advance greatly in religion, it is indispensable that she should impress on her heart the truth, that her superior stands to her in the place of God, and that whatever God wills her to do, He ordains through the superior's mouth." She also said that such a soul would make great advances in holy virtues, and enumerated five special graces which God would impart to it.

"1. That through the faith of a subject having such a lively impression, God would largely communicate Himself both to her superior and herself.

"2. That to her all obediences would be alike, whether prosperous or adverse.

"3. That such a religious would always find

her heart calm and tranquil, and would experience great interior content and sweetness.

"4. That she would be more fitted to aid Holy Church by her prayers, since Jesus hears and answers the obedient, and she being most obedient that which she asks will be granted.

"5. That God will wreathe Himself a crown of such souls; for as the crown manifests the greatness of the King, so they in all their works honour and glorify God."

CHAPTER LVI.

OF HER PERFECT RELIGIOUS POVERTY.

The saint was such a lover of holy poverty, that she seemed like a new St. Francis of Assisi returned again to earth. Before she became a nun, she used to say, "I esteem every earthly thing as dirt and dust, so that I may gain Jesus Christ;" and her affections were entirely detached from earthly things. Afterwards in the community, where virtuous poverty flourished for the love and the imitation of Christ, it would be difficult to say how much she studied it. In her cell there was no danger of superfluity, for she would keep nothing of the kind, but often sought most diligently to see if there were anything which she could do without. She once found two sheets of pins, which are necessary for nuns, and instantly thinking she had a superfluity, gave half away. She was obliged

to ask the superior for a little serge to mend her habit, but afterwards did not use it. One day, in looking over her cell, she found this piece of serge, when she took a scruple concerning it, thinking it superfluous, and with tears in her eyes, carried it to the superior, declaring her fault, and thanking the Lord for having preserved her life till she could do penance. There shone in her cell a perfect poverty, since it contained only a straw mattress for her bed, an ordinary crucifix which all the nuns had, and the book of the Gospels for her oratory. Once in rapture she spoke thus of the crucifix: "O Incarnate Word, if I thought that Thine image would deprive me of the smallest glory in heaven, I would instantly divest myself of it." No delicate food ever entered her mouth, and when on extraordinary occasions it was sometimes given her at table, she left it with the excuse, that it did not agree with her, or that she did not relish it, and gave it with permission to the others. For herself she preferred coarse and cheap food, and if the seasoning were insipid, so much the more did she like it. Sometimes she asked the cook to give her a plate of remains of the broth for a poor woman, and she thinking that she wanted to give it away in alms, gave it her; but the poor woman was herself, who delighted in the fare of the poor.

The charity of her monastery and superior being so great, that they were careful in providing her with necessaries, she was afflicted, and often wept because they took such care of

her, concealing her wants as much as possible, that they might not be supplied, while the superior, to avoid giving her pain, often withheld many kind attentions from her.

When an opportunity of suffering occurred, or when she was in want of something, she rejoiced and triumphed. One morning in 1600, through an oversight of the cellarer and the server, no bread was placed before her. She rejoiced, and was silent, and when dinner was ended, whilst all returned thanks she rose with the others, and so great was her joy that she could not suppress her laughter whilst all were returning thanks. Afterwards, she felt a scruple at having laughed, and went to tell her fault to the prioress, who having ordered her under obedience to tell the cause of so much mirth, she did so, declaring that she never in the world enjoyed so great a pleasure as that. She often lamented that having professed poverty she should die without having experienced it, since she seemed to herself to be too well taken care of and provided for, and she could not think that she was observing this poverty when she wanted no necessary.

When she heard any poor persons begging, it seemed as if she felt a holy envy of them. She herself desired to go begging, and was wont to say, "O if I had ever been permitted to ask alms, I should have gloried in it, and when in rainy weather, I returned home tired and comfortless, O how great would have been my delight! I am not worthy of this." She would

never wear new, but old and worn clothes, and the meaner they were the better she liked them; so that when the superior wished to provide some garment for her, she was obliged to let some sister wear it first, and then devise some means of inducing her to take it.

Thus it happened in the year 1588. She was shivering from the winter's cold, having only one old and very ragged tunic, so that she suffered greatly. On the night of St. John the Evangelist, December 29th, matins being ended, the prioress in compassion called her into the choir, and causing her to stand in the midst, the greater part of the nuns being present, she said, that to accustom her to the greater practice of holy poverty, she wished her to take off her own habit, and then if the mothers and sisters pleased, she should dress herself in another, given her for the love of God. The prioress then asked all the nuns if they were content, and they, with much emotion, touched even to tears by this spectacle and example of sanctity, said, "Yes." She was then made to take off her ragged tunic and clothe herself in that of another sister, who took it off on the spot, saying, "I give it you for the love of God, to keep till it is asked of you." In this way she received it with great pleasure. The holy mother greatly desired that all the nuns should feel this love of poverty, and especially endeavoured to implant it in her subjects, whom she wished to be detached from all things, though she was very careful in providing them with necessaries.

She often went round to search the little altars of her novices, and when she found anything superfluous, took it away, saying, that poverty and superfluity were incompatible. She took away a pair of angels from a novice, because in painting them she had either put on or painted some gold trimmings. When she saw any one in the slightest degree attached to anything given her for her use, she took it away or changed it; and when a novice willingly parted with it, she felt indescribable pleasure, whilst if she saw one inclined to vanity in new habits, she caused old ones to be given her. One of her subjects in the community, having had a black veil given her for her use, would not make it up, as it was not to her taste. On seeing this the good mother gave her a sharp reproof, by which she delivered her from the fancy of having veils to her taste, and she further ordered her for a certain time to come to her, and beg her for the love of God to give her the oldest and most shabby veil to be found in the noviceship. When she found any one who complained of ill-dressed food, and who did not esteem the simple and mean things of the community, she reproved her, saying, "Remember that you profess poverty, and the poor when they beg are well pleased if they can get a fragment of bread." She said that poverty should be the badge of religious works, and as the men of the world distinguish their property by stamping it with their arms, so it was desirable that the works of religious persons should be known to

be religious, and that, therefore, it was desirable that they should be stamped with poverty. Though the saint wished the community most tenderly to consider the sick, yet she also wished that the vow of poverty should shine in the food, the apartments, and everything else belonging to the sick in the infirmary, and that there should be a marked distinction between a sick nun and a sick secular. She gave in her illnesses a most perfect and lively example of this virtue of poverty. She wished her daughters to enter deeply into the nobility of holy religious poverty, to which God Himself is given in reward, and she said sometimes, "Then, sisters, may we truly call ourselves nuns of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, when being fatigued and weary we get reproofs and disciplines instead of refreshment. O what a grace and favour would it be to us, sisters, if when we desired our meals, we should have nothing to eat, if when we needed rest, we should have no bed on which to sleep; if when we required a change of clothes, through the poverty of the community there were no clothes to give us. I, for my part, should be delighted, and would give my blood for any one who would procure me such a favour." In a rapture, which she had on the fifth night of Pentecost, 1585, speaking of religious poverty, she said to Jesus, "Blessed are they who purely follow Thee, without possessing anything transitory, seeing that for their reward they will possess Thee, who art the Treasure of all treasures, the Wealth of all wealths, the

infinite Wealth of Paradise! Where shall we find the purchase-money? what are we to give in exchange for such a Good? O, who would believe it? Nothing, nothing is demanded, but for the love of God to possess nothing, to desire nothing in this world, to want nothing but God. 'Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ.' I say more, that we only desire God for Himself. O most rich and excellent poverty! The poor are they who have the purchase-money of Paradise in their hands, for its treasures are to be bought with perfect poverty, and the greater the soul's poverty the more does God fill it with His treasures by which it can purchase Paradise. O, who would not love this poverty which obtains for us such great gifts from God! 'Beati pauperes spiritu, &c. Quam dilecta tabernacula tua Domine virtutum, concupiscit et deficit anima mea,' I say in the desire of possessing heaven, or in the desire of possessing poverty which is worth heaven to me, since Thou willest that with this I should purchase heaven, and the price is sufficient for so great a kingdom."

When she heard that some careless religious, who, being scantily provided for by their order, valued themselves on that account, and boasted of observing a poverty surpassing that of others, while at the same time they complained that the community did not give them clothes and other conveniences, adding, that had they these things they would not go so meanly clad, nor observe so much abstinence, she exclaimed with sobs and sighs, "O, the blindness of creatures! O,

state of religion, how little art thou known! O, the misery of those who would cloak their own evil with that which is truly good! This is the ruin of many souls! These deluded ones think to find merit in their works, and will find eternal condemnation, since amid the discomforts of poverty they have had a voluntary propriety!" She used also to say that the observant religious, who so dresses and lives as to want nothing but what is provided for him by the community and superiors, is sure of salvation; and that, on the contrary, the salvation of that religious is hopeless who is a voluntary proprietor, and is ever eager after good fare, though he may dress meanly, and seek to stifle his conscience by his poor habit. Such a one deceives himself, and as he has not the courage to divest himself of all things, there is no heaven for him.

One Sunday, when the choir was singing vespers, she was rapt in ecstasy, and the Lord showed her a great number of religious who were sinking like thunderbolts into the depths of hell, and she understood that they had been chiefly condemned for not observing their vow of poverty. In her exclamation she used these words, "O poverty, O religious poverty, how little art thou known and observed! O, wert thou known and observed, cells would not be so full of ornament, the holding and spending money at pleasure would be abhorred as poison, and many other pomps and vanities too unbecoming a true religious would be banished from the cloisters! O my Jesus, how is the beauty of religious pov-

erty deformed by cursed propriety! O how many religious souls burn in hell for not having valued the observance of holy poverty!"

At another time she said, "I cannot understand how those religious who have bound themselves to God by three solemn vows, will not observe community amongst themselves, but spoil by their propriety the lovely rule of perfect life. O accursed propriety, which has so many excuses and devices, and which so often makes that appear good which is in reality a fault and a vice!" At another time she said, "O sisters, I cannot understand how religious can with a good conscience have private incomes, or how the offices of communities are supported by private incomes or exertions, whence it often arrives, that religious are more attached to worldly things than seculars themselves. O my Jesus, let me suffer any pain so that the spouses dedicated to Thee may be disposed to the observance of life in community, since to my great sorrow Thou showest me such multitudes of unhappy ones sinking into hell!" "O happy religious," she exclaimed another time, "who are so much honoured by God, that their portion will be God Himself, since by solemn vow they have left all else for God! O rich poverty, which makest us possessors of the Supreme Good! But, on the contrary, woe to such religious as retain any thing by an act of appropriation, trafficking with it, as those who have no obligation! Alas! acting thus, they reject God who is their portion, holding that which is not Him,

in contradiction of the promises made to Him. God grant that after death, when the examination shall take place, they may not be rejected by Him, and eternally separated from the Supreme Good! O poor religious, so blind to their state! O how are simplicity and poverty sunk in communities, and how little known by those who profess them! God knows whether that blindness will be excused in the day of divine scrutiny, when not only faults, but things which we regard as virtues, will appear to be faults and vices." The holy mother was once rapt in ecstasy, and saw the soul of a nun, who had passed to the other life with the highest reputation of sanctity, as her life had certainly been most praiseworthy. She saw her so irradiated with glory, that she seemed as if she could never be satisfied in admiring her loveliness, but when she looked on her hands, she saw them deprived of all splendour and ornaments of glory, and was given to understand that this was permitted by God, because that nun when living had made many presents to seculars, being naturally very affectionate and liberal; whence the blessed mother exclaimed in rapture, "O how displeasing must be that fault in the eyes of God, since it has deprived that soul, otherwise happy, of that supreme light which she would have had, had she been free from that fault!"

CHAPTER LVII.

OF HER WONDERFUL OBSERVANCE OF THE VOW OF CHASTITY.

We can add little to what has been said at large respecting the angelic purity of soul and body displayed by this blessed servant of God. We have seen that at the age of ten years, she consecrated herself to God by a vow of perpetual virginity, and that when she was grown up, and her parents thought of marrying her, she, to preserve her vow, boldly told her father, that she would rather lose her head than give up the monastic life. Afterwards on entering religion she made a solemn vow of chastity at her profession, and the perfection with which she kept that vow during her whole life, may be clearly known from those words uttered by her in her last illness, when she thanked God that she had never known what an act contrary to purity was, nor how chastity might be soiled, adding another most remarkable thing, that during her whole life she never remembered to have taken pleasure in anything but God, and that in her last passage she felt that no thought gave her so much comfort under the heavy pains which she endured, as this. She frequently repeated these words, "Thou knowest, O my God, that my heart has desired none but Thee," and this great purity is the more astonishing

when we consider, that in the two first years of her probation, that is, from 1584 to 1587, she endured severe sensual temptations from the devils, but as she declared during the last days of her life, she had never understood the design of the devils in these temptations; so that by the aid of divine grace and by her most vigilant diligence, she was able to drive the enemy away before the temptation assailed her, and though she felt the first impulse of temptation, yet her intellect and will being occupied in God, and far removed from all things earthly and sensual, she never learned what the temptation was, and therefore said, "I fought with an enemy whom I knew not." But still being so assailed by the infernal enemy, she had recourse to the aid of the blessed Virgin, who appearing to her, as has been said, on the 15th of April, 1587, whilst she was locked into a room apart, and praying, covered her with a white veil, telling her that in future she should never know the least thought or feeling contrary to purity; and so it came to pass, for from that time she felt herself insensible as a stone to all such temptations. She was always devoted to St. Thomas of Aquin, for the great act by which he preserved his purity, and for the gift, so similar to her own, which that act merited for him, to be guided by the Lord's angel, and to be free from all impure annoyances as she became, after being covered by the veil from the hands of the blessed Virgin. All who knew and conversed with her, declared her purity to be rather angelical than

human, and said that her looks, gestures, and words, breathed the odour of the purity which she had in her heart, inspiring those who looked on her with pure and chaste thoughts. There was in her face such an admirable beauty, that she appeared like an angel of Paradise, and something inexplicably divine shone in her countenance, and attracted the love of all hearts. She spoke of this virtue of purity with such sublimity as to lead all to desire it. It might easily be seen how greatly she herself delighted in it, and she used to say, that from her tender years the Lord had given her a particular desire for this virtue.

Her body yielded so sweet and unusual an odour of purity, that the nuns who inhaled it did not know to what to compare it. They always desired to inhale it, for it was far sweeter than the odour of flowers, and it seemed to them to excite to purity and the desire of being with God. In the last three years of her life, during which she was confined to her bed by sickness, she occupied a room in the infirmary, which usually had an unpleasant smell, but during those three years which she passed there, it always was perfumed by the sweet odour of her body, though the nuns had used no aromatics whatever. This odour was also communicated to the clothes which she wore. So gracious were her looks, that merely by looking on her afflicted spirits were consoled and sad hearts made glad. There was such virtue in those pure looks, that souls involved in sin could not bear them without great

confusion. One day it happened that a dissipated and profligate young man came to visit one of his sisters, who was a novice in that monastery, and as it was a rule of the house that the mistress of novices should always accompany the novices to the grate, the blessed mother, being mistress at that time, went to the grate with her. When the novice arrived, the young man, on seeing her, saluted her immediately; but at the sight of her companion he instantly, without saying a word, turned his back and went away in a rage. The novice, amazed at her brother's ill-breeding, complained of it to her mother, who came to visit her a few days after, and asked her if she knew the cause of her brother's strange conduct. Her mother said that it had arisen from his being unable to stand the presence of the mother who was with her, for that on her looking at him, he had felt such shame and confusion, that, seized by extraordinary uneasiness, he could no longer remain in her presence, but was constrained to depart.

The nuns themselves, if there were any fault in them, however slight, felt themselves unable to remain in her presence without shame and confusion, and therefore examined their conscience before going into her presence. And as those who were stained by sin could not endure her presence, so she suffered greatly in theirs; and therefore, though she always went to the grate reluctantly, she was especially reluctant when it was to see persons who had not the fear of God. Her presence, on the contrary, gave

great comfort to the tried and the tempted, chasing away all their fears; and some declared that when troubled by temptations, if they only went near her and secretly touched her habit, they were relieved. Some experienced wonderful effects by only remaining where she was, some by looking at her, others by only thinking of her; for their spirits were tranquillized, their hearts calmed, and every annoying temptation departed, whilst they felt pure and holy desires for increased perfection.

But it is not surprising that the religious, who regarded her as being, what she truly was, a saint, and knew her great purity of mind and constant union with God, should feel these good changes in seeing, conversing with, touching, or thinking of her; since even beasts forgot their fierceness in her presence, and submitted to her. A goat had been sent from Leghorn as a present to one of the sisters, but on being brought into the monastery, it became so furious, that the nuns feared that it would do some mischief. With all their efforts they could not catch it, but, on the contrary, it became more ferocious, and having entered a room in which the nuns were, appeared more fierce and terrible than ever. Just then Sister Mary Magdalene came in, and approaching the goat, it instantly lay down at her feet, and became gentle and tame, allowing her to lead it where she pleased. At another time whilst the nuns were at dinner, the door of the convent having on some account been left open, a large dog entered, and on finding him-

self shut in, ran furiously hither and thither, and at last entered the refectory, to the great terror of all. Sister Mary Magdalene rose from table, approached him, and took him by the ear, whilst he, now become as gentle as a lamb, allowed her to lead him to the door, and turn him out. When the others asked how it was that she was not afraid, she replied with great humility, "One beast led another." Her words also were all full of purity, grace, and sweetness, and greatly consoled afflicted, tried, and disconsolate souls, and sometimes a simple word of God would remove the burthens and distresses, and the old griefs and passions of long standing from the hearts of others. Her words were effective and penetrating. If she praised a virtue, she excited the soul to acquire it; if she spoke with detestation of a vice, she moved the heart to shun it; and when speaking of the love of God, she enkindled love. She desired greatly to impress this virtue of purity on the hearts of all the nuns, and when she came to any place where they were speaking of purity, she was filled with joy, and said, "I shall gladly stay here, for here they speak of purity." She felt greater regard for, and sympathy with, those who professed this purity, though they were imperfect, than for married persons and widows, though they were more holy, and she said that to advance herself in this virtue, she would have endured any pain and torment, for that she desired to have the virtue of purity in as great perfection as is possible in this life. For the

same reason, she greatly honoured and reverenced virgins. Once a young person recently admitted, and still in the secular dress, being in choir with the nuns, saw Sister Mary Magdalene come in and courtesy low to the nuns in passing, as though she had been their servant. The young person supposed that it must be from the love of the religious habit, but on seeing her make a similar courtesy on coming to herself, she thought it must be a secular ceremony; but on making inquiries of her sister novices, they told her that the good mother made that courtesy in honour of virginity.

One of her first delights was to find herself in holy inclosure, sure of never having to return to the world, nor to the conversation of worldlings. When considering this benefit she seemed actually to dissolve in sweetness, and with great affection kissed the walls of the monastery, saying to those who asked her why she did so, "Have I not great reason, my sisters, to do this? These holy walls separate me from the unhappy world, and secure to me the greatest treasure which I possess on earth," by which she meant her virginity. On another occasion she said, "If the men of the world knew the blessed enjoyments of a virgin's life, they would run to the most austere communities as the thirsty deer to the fountain, so that they might preserve themselves intact and pure, for the more a vine is hedged in the safer it is." Although she had been assured by the Blessed Virgin that she should always preserve this virtue of chastity,

she nevertheless guarded it with the greatest caution and care, living in the most jealous fear lest she should lose this precious gem, which fits souls for following the Lamb in Paradise whereever He goes. The means by which she guarded it were the following: First, from the day of entering the community till her death, if not prevented by the use of medicines, or other similar impediments, she usually communicated every morning. Secondly, before her death, she declared that she had always greatly loved creatures solely to fulfil the precept of love left us by Jesus, and for the love which He bore to them, but that beyond that love, she had never felt the least attachment to any creature, nor had ever permitted any one to love her with disorderly affection, and had she seen that any of her subjects attached herself to her in the least, she would have constantly mortified her, and have sought in every way to detach her. Thirdly, she only spoke of God and spiritual things, and never would allow her daughters to converse on the things of the world, as of their relations, saying, she thought that a great fault, and that a person consecrated to God by a solemn vow of chastity, should not admit into her heart the smallest thought contrary to her religious profession. Much less would she have allowed them to talk of marriages, alliances, births, &c., which with her would have been a scandal not to be endured. Fourthly, she never touched nor permitted herself to be touched by others without the greatest necessity, and in her last illness

of three years, when she was so much reduced as to be unable to turn in her bed, and it was necessary for the sisters to turn her from one side to the other, she would say, "Sister, if you think that it can be contrary to purity to touch me in this manner, let me stay; I will willingly remain in torments on this side, even till I breed vermin." Fifthly, as far as she was able, she avoided speaking with seculars at the grate; I say seculars, because no religious of any sort went there, unless it were the brother or near relative of a nun by a written order. When called to the grate, she wept, and was obliged to be impelled by obedience, and when going, she would say, "Novices, pray to God for me, for I am called to the grate;" and she gave orders that they should soon make some excuse for calling her, saying that she would much rather pass the time in the fire of Purgatory, than at the grate with seculars. She had such an abhorrence of the parlour, that when obliged to pass near it she felt pain, and said that the spouses of Christ could draw nothing from that place but disquiet, disturbance, and temptations; and she usually called it "the place of distractions." Whenever she heard the parlour named, she said, "I call it not the parlour, but the Purgatory." She exhorted all the sisters to shun the grates, saying, "Remember, sisters, that you are consecrated to God, and that no sister ever leaves the grates, without requiring some time to recover that interior peace which she had

before, for the discourses and reasonings of seculars, veil and often overshadow the white lily of chastity." If she saw any one going with joy to the parlour, she would say, "Sister, one may clearly see that you are not entirely become one of us, for it is the mark of the nuns of St. Mary of the Angels, not to be rejoiced, but saddened when called to the grates. On the contrary, if she saw amongst the nuns one who had a great aversion for the grates and the parlour, she rejoiced, and regarded this as an especial fruit of the Holy Sacrament of the altar. Sixthly, she kept up no intercourse out of the monastery, neither with seculars nor religious, and felt great repugnance when there was a necessity for writing or receiving letters, for she said it was not fitting for a religious, a spouse of Jesus, to write or receive letters from seculars, since they refresh in their minds the things of the world. When letters were addressed to her by seculars, who begged her to pray for their various concerns, the prioress, who knew how much that annoyed her, generally did not give them to her, nor recommend the writers to her in particular, but only when the nuns were all assembled, and the saint amongst the rest, she recommended all generally to pray for those objects, and so the seculars gained their point, and Sister Mary Magdalene her's, which was to be concealed and retired, and to seek to please God only without occupying herself with creatures. On that account her letters are most rare, and the few which she wrote were under obedience, as one of which

we have spoken, addressed to the Princess Maria, Queen of France. Her relation, Signor Lodovico Capponi, one day wrote to her, begging her to pray for him under an affliction. This letter the prioress thought it right to give her, and she prayed, but sent no reply; but as the gentleman required one, the father-confessor was obliged to give her an obedience, under which she sent him a consoling answer, which he received to his great joy and preserved as a relic, knowing that a letter from her to a secular was never seen. Her writing was simple and spiritual, without any sort of ceremony, as may be seen from the following note. In the year 1598, my superiors at Rome, having written to me that I ought to take the government of our college at Florence, I was uncertain how to act, for I knew well my own imperfections and unfitness for the office. I therefore recommended the matter to her, desiring her to pray, and then repeat to me what the Lord should inspire her to say. She prayed, and was beginning to give me a verbal reply, but I desired that her answer should be given to me in writing, that it might not escape from my memory. She was pleased to gratify me, and I now preserve that autograph reply as a relic, and give it here without changing a single word, as it may serve for all directors:

"Jesus Maria.

"Rev. Father in Christ,

"To perform your obedience, I write for you as much as I can remember regarding your ques-

tion, which is this. First, that you should take the charge of the college with the same love with which Christ took the cross.

"Secondly, that you should continue in it (the office) with the same love and contentment with which our Lord Christ remained on the cross.

"Thirdly, that in this (office) you should only seek what the Lord sought when hanging on the cross, which was to suffer, love, give glory to His Father, and pray for His crucifiers.

"If I said more, I have forgotten it, for, as you know, I have no memory. Pray God that He will enlighten my mind on a particular thing which occasions me doubt and distress. Benedicite.

"May Jesus fill us with His zeal."

CHAPTER LVIII.

OF THE PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION OF THE SAINT.

From her tender years she began to practise and delight in meditation on the mysteries of the Life, Passion, and Death of her most beloved Redeemer, as has been observed, and so great was the consolation which she drew from it, that to continue this exercise in her father's house and the monastery of San Giovannino, where she was placed for education, she sought out the most retired places, that she might be undisturbed and more recollected, passing three or four hours without being aware of the time.

As she took very little food, she was reproved by those who had her in charge, when she replied, "Were I to eat more, I should hinder my prayer, which is more substantial food." And truly she experienced this, for the profit which her soul derived from prayer was manifested in her detachment from all vanity, in the mortification of all her inclinations, however lawful, and in her ardent desire of advancing in perfection. It was seen also in the concentration of all the interior powers of the soul and the feelings of the body, so that amidst every labour she was always with the Lord, who having drawn her out of the world and invested her with the habit of religion, soon raised her to the heights of most perfect contemplation. She recited the divine office with great reverence and devotion, never absenting herself from the choir by night or by day, unless in time of sickness or when required to engage in some other occupation under obedience. Even when weakness rendered her unable to go to the choir by sickness, she caused the office to be recited by others, whilst she listened devoutly, saying at the close as she struck her breast, "Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori." "This is my part, I do not deserve to be able to say more." She passed whole nights in prayer, and all the time which remained to her after the common exercises, or rather we should say, she spent it in the most sublime and deep contemplation, accompanied by ecstatic raptures, from her entrance into the novitiate so frequent, and to her great mortifi-

cation so evident to all, that she asked no other favour than not to have them so, but that she might simply remain united to God in her work and distracting occupations. On the 9th of June, 1590, it appeared that Jesus was pleased to grant her the grace suited to promote His greater glory and the salvation of souls. On the 7th of March, 1593, when every faculty and feeling of her mind and body were rapt in ecstasy, she received new strength from the Holy Ghost; the Lord granting her the same light and union with Him at all times and places when in her natural state, as when her senses were abstracted. She felt her will so inflamed with the fire of the Holy Ghost, that she could continue in the same act of love to God and her neighbour, as when in ecstasy; and the same Holy Spirit, as a resplendent ray, infused Himself into her intellect that she might enjoy the same light. Then in the form of a rapid river He so fertilized her memory, that she ever remembered the works wrought by the Incarnate Word, as well as those performed by the Three Divine Persons *in divinis*. She then saw the Holy Ghost, like a a razor, shave her hair, that is, her desires and thoughts, renewing them that they might be heavenly, pure, and loving. She also heard the same Holy Spirit, like a resounding voice, impart Himself to her senses, that she might hear this word, "Honour and glory be to God!" by which she understood that whether seeing, hearing, speaking, or working, all was to be to the honour and glory of God.

She then saw the Eternal Word, as at the age of twelve years, leave His Father's throne and enter her heart, to dwell there for ever; and as when amongst the doctors He asked them questions, not to learn, but to teach, so He would, inhabiting her heart, continually interrogate her, that is, instruct her, by giving her the knowledge of her own vileness and of His greatness and goodness. He willed also that she should interrogate Him, that is, that she should diligently and closely scrutinize His works, that she might know His divine will regarding herself and her neighbour. Every time that she received these gifts she suffered bodily pain, and crying out, said with a loud voice, "O Word, O Word, remember that I am a mortal creature; the fragile vessel of this body cannot sustain such violence!" Thus God filled her with His gifts, and rendered her an eagle, ever flying, as it were, on the wings of contemplation, fixing her in the consideration and enjoyment of the Divine truth and perfections; from which view she became so absorbed in the wonder and sweetness which she experienced, and so enkindled by the love of God and of creatures capable of the Divine election, that she seemed dead to herself, and inflamed by holy desires and a burning zeal to draw all, if possible, to the knowledge and love of her Lord, who seemed never to be satisfied in purifying that holy one by His gracious influences, both in her exterior senses and interior powers. On the 10th of June, 1590, so much strength and persevering grace were infused into all the powers

of her mind and the senses of her body, through the instrumentality of St. Angelus the Carmelite, that for the future she could never use them but for the glory of God and the good of her neighbour. She saw the saint, who with a precious and fragrant unguent anointed her senses; the eyes first, then the ears, the mouth, the hands, and the feet.

This exterior unction being over, he went to the soul, first to the will, giving it two marks, the first, to be in all things conformed to the will of God, and to all creatures in whatever did not offend God. The second, never to change countenance, excepting when giving a reproof, in order to be understood; in which case it would be enough that the heart did not change.

He purified her memory, inscribing on it these seven sentences:

1. Pacem relinquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis.

2. Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo.

3. Meus cibus est, ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me, ut perficiam opus ejus.

4. Quicumque enim fecerit voluntatem Patris mei, qui in Cœlis est, ipse meus, frater, et soror, et mater est.

5. Qui autem scandalizaverit unum de pusillis istis, qui in me credunt, expedit ei; ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo ejus et demergatur in profundum maris.

6. Pater si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste.

7. Pater ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt.

He impressed three objects on her understanding:

1. The purity of God, that she might be enamoured of it.

2. The communicative love of God, that she might imitate it in communicating to her neighbour.

3. The charity of all the blessed, and the various virtues of all her mothers and sisters, that she might be ready to resign her life, with all her knowledge and ability.

He then purified her heart, in which he laid three stones:

On the first was to rest the Word, and the salvation of her neighbour.

On the second the Holy Ghost, and the joy of all the elect.

On the third the Father, and her own salvation.

He then washed her soul in the blood of Jesus, and when he had purified it, she said, "Lavit animam meam in sanguine Sponsi mei; so that it shall be white as the lilies, and crimson as the rose." He then placed a lamp in her soul, which was the knowledge of her own nothingness and baseness. He then purified the concupiscible part of the soul, on which Jesus gave her three desires:

1. The salvation of souls, not only of the faithful, but also of unbelievers.

2. The desire of poverty.

3. The desire that all creatures should love one another.

He afterwards purified her intention, by which he said she should always repose under a juniper tree, which meant the Passion of Christ; for as the juniper pricks where it touches, so meditation on the Passion produces compunction and compassion; and that her other intention should be to give honour and glory to God. "Non quæro gloriam meam."

But though enjoying these Divine illustrations and instructions, she never refused the guidance of her spiritual fathers in regard to the exercise of prayer and contemplation, as directed to the amendment of life and the sanctity of manners. In 1599 she saw the glory of St. John the Evangelist and St. Ignatius, Confessor, of whose spirit she spoke wonders; so that in the November of the same year she desired to go through the Exercises of St. Ignatius with three other mothers, the director of the Exercises being Father Virgilio Cepari, the writer of the greater part of this Life. She made the Exercises with so much consolation to herself as to feel the highest esteem for them; and many times during her life she gave them to several sisters, teaching them how to practise those inspirations which the Lord communicated in them. Afterwards the custom of making them annually was introduced into the venerable monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, with no small profit and increase of the spirit of study and prayer.

CHAPTER LIX.

SOME AFFECTIONS AND PROFITABLE INTELLIGENCES DRAWN FROM THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE SAINT.

Contemplation, which is the most sublime prayer practised on earth—whether it be passive and infused into the soul which accepts the Divine operations in itself, or active, and acquired by the help of grace and industry—is nothing more than a most simple and fixed gazing upon the Divine perfections, truths, and mysteries, producing love, gratitude, zeal, contrition, and a thousand other dispositions, or else a single one, the mind continuing firm in that steadfast, simple, and affectionate view.

Now this exercise, which in many is and has been the exercise of hours only, was in our saint continual, for all things whatsoever served to fix her in the immoveable and tender contemplation of God in His perfections and attributes, or in most sweet silence, though sometimes the sublime intelligences and the affections which she felt were disclosed in articulate words without her being aware of it.

From these contemplations I shall select some of the most instructive. On the 5th of January, 1584, she was led by the Spirit to contemplate the Blessed Virgin, bearing in her sacred arms her only Son, pale and lifeless; and gazing with tender affection on the sacred wounds of the

hands, feet, and side, she said, "These are four glowing furnaces; for those of the feet make but one. In the first of these, that of the feet, the hard iron is placed for softening. Obdurate sinners are like the hard iron, which being placed in the furnace becomes so soft as to be bent in any way. So when the sinner enters the furnace of the sacred wound of the holy feet of Jesus, the hardness of his heart is softened. He melts into tears of contrition for his sins, and may be disposed of at pleasure.

"In the second furnace, that of the left hand, rocks are calcined for the building. These are converted sinners, who entering it, increase the edifice of the holy Church; as St. Paul and Magdalene, who became so useful by their glorious conversions.

"In the third furnace, the wound of the right hand, glasses are made, and these are the virgins, since though glass is not so useful as many things of greater value, yet it is used for ornament, and the sight of it gives great pleasure; so the virgins, though not so useful in the church of God as the martyrs, confessors, and doctors, are beyond denial great ornaments to the Church, in which the divine Word takes great delight and complacency.

"The fourth furnace of the sacred Heart is that in which gold is put, and all enter there who are united to the Word by charity through faith and love." Here she added, "Gold serves for two especial purposes, for ornament and for setting gems. King Solomon used it for orna-

ment, 'Fecit sibi Rex Solomon de lignis Libani Reclinatorium aureum, ascensum purpureum media charitate constravit.' Gold is also used to set precious stones, which if not set in it, are in great danger of being lost; but being employed by charity are dear to God, and edifying to our neighbour."

In the same year, 1584, on the 22nd of January, she was raised to the highest contemplation of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, and amazed at the wonder, repeated, "O Incomprehensible God, Thy greatness is eternal, and Thy goodness ineffable. I behold, and rejoice in beholding the three Divine Persons flow in their divine influxes each into the other, in a mode indescribable and inscrutable. O God Incomprehensible, most admirable and eternal, albeit Thou, the eternal God, art immense and inscrutable, yet art Thou unspeakably good, who dost in goodness communicate to the creature who perceives its nothingness, some perception of Thine eternal Being! But admirable as is this communication, it may truly be said to be a mere nothing, compared with that between God and the creature.

"The Three Persons flow in their divine influx into all the Blessed in Paradise, and the Blessed flow into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with praise and thanksgiving, magnifying, praising, and exalting the Most Holy Trinity, constantly and incessantly. The Three Divine Persons flow into all the creatures who are in the world, and the Incarnate Word flows in again

in sending to creatures those gifts and graces by which they may be so disposed that the Most Holy Trinity can delight in them. I behold the Father who aspires after the salvation of men. I perceive the Son, who respires in men, and the Holy Ghost, who inspires the aspiration of the Father. And like a longing desire for the salvation of men, the respiration of the Son is a repose which He produces in the soul, rendering it a creature fit for the notice of God the Father. The inspiration of the Holy Ghost is the light which He inspires, by which the soul advances from virtue to virtue, till she beholds the God of gods in Sion. This is the admirable operation, continually wrought by God for the creature!"—She added, "I see that in an especial manner the Most Holy Trinity flows in three divine influences into religious, but they receive them so differently, that I cannot cease to marvel;" and as she stood in this amazement, she was suddenly shown by God a religious, to her unknown, who did not receive these divine influences, rendering herself unworthy of them by remaining in mortal sin, who had a number of devils around her, holding her bound by many chains. This sight filled her with such great terror, that she did not cease to weep, and whilst her thoughts were fixed on this soul, she saw her on a sudden miserably plunged into hell, with a multitude of infernal spirits; on which, being unable to endure so cruel a sight, she uttered a cry which resounded through the whole monastery, and exclaimed, "O religious soul, who

would have believed that with obstinate will, you would not only live, but die in mortal sin!" and through the intensity of her feeling she was so overwhelmed with terror for two successive days, as to dismay all who saw her.

On another occasion she said of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, "O what a lovely circle is this of the Most Holy Trinity! Inscrutable, Incomprehensible! There is in this circle a Mirror, a Book, and a Fountain. I must look into the Mirror, study the Book, and bathe in the Fountain.

"The Mirror is in the Incarnate Word.

"The Book is in the Father, and in His bosom.

"The Fountain is in the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER LX.

DEVOUT SENTIMENTS ON THE MYSTERY OF THE BURIAL OF CHRIST, AND THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

In 1585, on the 12th of May, she was rapt in spirit for forty hours, in remembrance of the forty hours during which the most holy humanity of Christ remained in the sepulchre. Besides most devout affections in beholding the Body of Christ taken down from the cross and laid in the bosom of the Eternal Father, she was then heard to say in the person of the Blessed Virgin, "Adoro

Filium meum, et unigenitum Tuum: Offero Tibi pro omni creatura sanguinem, quem effudit ipse unigenitus Filius Tuus pro Redemptione humana," and then, "Date mihi Filium meum et Sponsum meum, qui fuit consolatio mea, et hac hora est afflictio mea; consolatus et contristatus est me." She appeared to contemplate the entire Body of Jesus in its several parts; she kissed the wounds, and looking on the side, said, "Why do not all enter into this Thine open side, this great cavern of love?" Then, as though she saw Him buried, "Now," said she, "we may well say, there is more than one Paradise, since where Thine Essence is is Paradise. Paradise then is the sepulchre, Paradise in Limbo, Paradise in Purgatory, and what more? Paradise even in Hell!" Then, a little afterwards, "O Word, O my Spouse, how many desire to retain Thee in the sepulchre, by not wishing for Thee, nay, even fearing to confess Thy name before creatures! Some complaining of receiving no gifts from Thee, keep Thee inclosed, and others for their own convenience lose Thee." Then, after remaining silent for some time, in the person of the Virgin, she called on Magdalene, Peter, John, and James, to enter the sepulchre and perform the obsequies of the Lord, praising Joseph and Nicodemus for the devotion and love with which they had buried Jesus. "You," said she, addressing them all, "will here together make a colloquy with my Son, whilst I in spirit will follow Him to every place where He will be, whether in the bosom of the Father; or if in Limbo, I shall be in

Limbo, or if in the sepulchre, I also shall be in the sepulchre."

Here she ceased to speak, and appeared for a long time in great admiration, for she saw the soul of the Word place itself with the Divinity in the bosom of the Eternal Father. Lifting up her hands, she exclaimed with exultation, "Vidi animam Verbi collocare Spiritum suum in essentia Divinitatis." The Eternal Father having shown her the exaltation and glory of the Word made Man, which was the reward of His humiliation, she then appeared to hear and see something with great admiration and pleasure, and after a long silence, broke out into these words: "Et conduxit me in locum magnum et altum," surrounded on the right and left by the sound of trumpets, citherns, and psalteries, and other musical instruments of which the soft sound is unutterable, the sweetness incomprehensible, and the melody past thought, "Vidi animam Verbi quiescere, collocari, et dilatari in sinu Patris." Here in great admiration she resumed her silence, and learned the effects which resulted to the angelical and human natures from the Passion and Death of the Incarnate Word, and the unhappy fate of the apostate angels and of wicked men, against whom she raised her voice, "Go, howl, cry as ye will! 'Et collocavit eos in inferno et sublimavit humanitatem nostram in confusione ejus. Vidi glorificationem meam et omnis creatura in ipso.'"

She then continued, "Thou art too great, too infinite to be understood, I mean, by myself,

who am pre-eminently full of ignorance and blindness. Yes, and of all others too, I say it. It will, yes, it will be understood, when that shall be disunited which is united by exterior conformity, but not by love. O, death is life and life is death through conformity to those who best know Thee, for he who knows Thee most, will suffer most in not possessing Thee!"

Here she began to speak of five manners of conformity.

"The first is that of ignorance, which being deprived of light, and knowing neither the greatness of God nor of the soul, commits sin, and then cloaks it with feigned and worthless humility.

"The second is natural, and therefore, from the instability of our nature not lasting.

"The third is the conformity of grace, and is humble; it proceeds from God, and is useful to ourselves and to our neighbour.

"The fourth is produced by admiration, and this is persevering, humble, and full of all grace.

"The last, that of love, is a sublime conformity, and springs from that intimate knowledge of the greatness of God, arising from a pure will; and this is not cloaked, but pure, simple, and sincere, and whilst it pleases the most Holy Trinity, is most useful to ourselves and our neighbour.

"To a soul thus conformed by love, Paradise is the same as Hell, and Hell the same as Paradise. Heaven is the same as earth, the human

being as the angel, the rational creature as the beast, light as darkness, for with that intimate knowledge of God it knows nothing besides, leaving itself as dead in the hands of God, and this proceeds from the intense and enkindled love which it bears towards Him. O sublime conformity, which unites things so contrary, and which is the wedding garment of charity, by which the loving soul like the vine produces that sweet fruit of the grape, whence is expressed the wine, which nourishes herself, and cheers the very heart of God. It nourishes herself, and is pressed out in the salvation of her neighbour. O fervent desire, which like a sweet wine-press, presses out from the fruit of such a soul, the salvation of her neighbour, the honour of God, and her own advantage!"

Here after being silent for some time, and expressing by signs her wonder at the small number of the elect, and the immense number of the wicked, she said, "The number of the various orders of saints and blessed spirits, which rejoice around the Word, is without number." In her detestation of the sins and offences of the world, she repeated, "O, if Thou wouldest give life, and take away these sins, though I should suffer and partake of hell, as I do now, yet nevertheless, it would seem a Paradise to me, for if these be removed, hell and Paradise are the same. The bush of Moses burned but did not consume, but I consume and do not burn. O Word, no more sins, no more sins! O good Jesus, how canst Thou now take pleasure in me, who neither

know, understand, nor love Thee!" (Here she showed by signs that she was being wholly consumed.) "O my Jesus, I know not if it be Thy will that my body should be entirely consumed in this manner. I know not whether I be on earth or in heaven, in hell, in the abyss! O bone Jesu, O bone Jesu, si ascendero in cœlum, Tu illic es, si descendero in Infernum, ades. O bone Jesu, O bone Jesu! Thou art all love, but Thou art all pure! O bone Jesu! O my Jesus, I neither understand myself nor Thee. Whether I be in Thee, Thou knowest, I know not. Whether I be on earth, Thou knowest. Whether I be in Heaven, in Purgatory; no, in hell! I venture to say that I endure so much of it, that I neither know where nor what I am. I am a nonentity, yet an infinite thing, as proceeding from Thee, who art infinite. All creatures are infinite, as proceeding from Thee who art infinite, but in their own being they are nothing. Being infinite they understand Thee, but as to their own being they are nothing, and being infinite, they understand infinite things, they understand Thy love which is infinite; they love Thee who art infinite; they possess Thee who art infinite. Whether I am or am not, Thou knowest. Whether I understand, comprehend, possess, I will say like Thine Apostle, 'Sive in corpore, sive extra corpus, nescio, Deus scit.' I care not whether I know and understand this. Thou art all mercy. Thou art all justice. 'Bone Jesu, bone Jesu. Benedicam Dominum in omni tempore. O Word, come, come, venies autem ad

me cum exultatione!' O most Beloved Spouse, sweeter than the sweetest honey, when wilt Thou come to me, I say to me, in essence and also in presence, for in presence I love Thee. Turn the eyes of Thy power, and let them behold the creature, with a deformity known to those only whom Thou dost cause to understand and endure the pain of such a sight. I am more amazed at those who offend Thy power, wisdom, and goodness, than at those who love Thee."

A short time after she showed signs of joy and exultation, at beholding the Eternal Word going in triumph to Limbo, to console and glorify the souls there. Then she began to converse with the Blessed Virgin, "In Psalterio psallam tibi, et adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum. Thou, O Mary, wert a temple, and thy Son was a temple. Thou didst behold thyself in Him and Him in thy neighbour. Thou wert the lovely temple, in which was made the worthy offering, for thou wert not only sanctified but conceived immaculate." Then "Vidi thronum Dei altum, et elevatum, sedentem in eo Mariam Matrem Jesu, encircled by various lilies, and upborne by four Angels. What glory can be rendered to Mary, for so high a vocation given her by the Word, and for her firm and steadfast faith!" She here spoke of the fervour with which Mary expected the return from Limbo and the Resurrection. Speaking of the Maries, who went to find His dead body in the sepulchre where it was not, she said, "They teach us that when the Word has left us, and that He seems as it

were dead to us, since we no longer feel Him; we must not rest but seek Him with great desire, and go with ardent sighs, even to the very bosom of the Father, not stopping till we find Him, not ceasing to call Him with our interior voice, sending out frequent arrows from the bow of love, till the same Blessed Word, like a bird which falls to the earth, permits Himself to be taken, making His power impotent."

Then returning to Limbo, "O happy souls," she said, "who though not present when the Word shed His blood, yet partook fully of its virtue, wearing and fitting to yourselves a vestment of blood, which having assumed, ye remained not for the least moment as inhabitants of that place. So if the soul fits herself for the participation of that blood, it is impossible that she should not be saved, and we shall all receive it if we unfit not ourselves for its reception. What led Thee to earth, O Word? Love. What led thee to heaven? Blood. What led Thee to us, but Thine own nature, which is to communicate itself? What led thee back to Paradise? Thy pains and scourgings. Who would not be grateful to Him for His infinite benefits? Love draws Him from heaven to earth, blood draws us from earth to heaven." Here she showed by signs that she saw Jesus risen, saying, "Omnes videntes eum mirati sunt in splendore gloriæ ejus. Where are the wounds, where the stripes? where the spittings?"

The thoughts and affections to which she gave utterance on the night of the Assumption of the

Blessed Virgin in the year.....were also very noble and devout; for having besought all the choirs of Angels, to obtain from the Lord the pardon of her faults, that she might be fit to ascend with the Virgin to heaven, she seemed, as she said, to see all the choirs of Angels laden with gifts, going in bands to the holy sepulchre, in which was deposited that most sacred ark, the body of Mary, that they might assist at the Assumption; but as they could not increase the glory of that body, it being perfect and consummate, that which they would have done for her, they did for the souls of the faithful, that they might be assumed with her. "Behold the Angels, who, going to the holy Humanity of the Word, draw from the roseate wounds various ornaments with which to adorn our souls, if they be disposed to receive them! All these ornaments signify the various virtues which they would impart to us, that the Virgin may always fix her complacent eyes upon us. The Archangels go to the roseate wound of the right hand, and load themselves with splendid collars destined for those who have never bowed their heads to their own will, but only to those creatures who counsel them for the honour of God. The Thrones draw from the left hand precious bracelets, signifying that we must only work for the honour of God, because this is our promise to Him, and so He is pleased. The Dominations draw from the precious wounds of the most holy feet ear-jewels, signifying the continual attention which we should pay to the interior operations of the Holy

Ghost, in order that we may put them in practice. The Principalities draw from the thorn-crowned head of the Word, the golden crown of charity, which is God Himself; Deus charitas est. From the cavity of the sacred side, the Powers draw the ring, the pledge so dear to spouses, without which they cannot be called spouses; 'Sponsabo te mihi in fide.' And the other three remaining choirs, what will they do? O they will adorn us with the marks of the Passion of the Word, that He may delight in us."

Here she declared that she saw the angels rejoice in festive dance around the place where the body of the Virgin reposed, which might be called another Paradise, since in her, that is, in her holy body, God Himself had reposed. Then when our Blessed Lady appeared to her to have been raised, she asked of her an interior and exterior renewal, asking nothing else but this, as this sufficed. Here she gave signs of great suffering. "O Mary," she said, "I fear that my soul will not disunite itself from the body as Thine did!" She afterwards saw the Virgin assumed, and hearing the angels sing most sweet canticles, said, "O what sweet canticles! They melt me, but I understand them not. I cannot read them; the substance is this, 'We assume her who assumed in herself all the miseries of the human race; we assume her who into herself has assumed all virtues!'" Here being completely absorbed in wonder, she repeated nine times, "Sancta et Immaculata virginitas," &c.,

and then added, "The Most Holy Trinity calls her holy nine times, having raised and exalted her above the nine choirs of angels. O admirable, that the Eternal Father, who is God, should with love attract to Himself a poor creature like Mary! By that same love with which He sent the Word to perform the work of redemption, by that love He attracted to Himself the thing redeemed. That love which moved the Eternal Word to draw Himself from Himself, the same moved Him to draw Mary to Himself. The Holy Ghost was not so ready to descend into Mary, and form that lovely little Body of the Humanity of the Word, as He was to assume Mary to Himself.

"Heaven did not appear finished without Mary, for it wanted its ornament. The saints were not perfectly glorified whilst Mary was wanting to Paradise, since they have received from her the fruit of their glorification. And what more? God Himself seemed not to enjoy His glory, being by nature so disposed to communicate Himself, whilst there was no creature in Paradise sufficiently pure to be capable of receiving His glory. O the Humanity of the Word! Yes, He was there, but He was God and Man, and by consequence glorious in Himself. And therefore the Eternal Father, fixing His eyes on Mary, delighted in her great purity, which had attracted the Word to herself, and inclosed Him in her little womb.

"If, then, this delight were so great, why dost Thou detain her so long on earth? Thou didst

please Thyself in detaining her on earth, as Thou wert pleased to bear her in Thy mind before Thou didst create her; for retaining her in Thyself, Thou didst behold the fruit which was to spring from her, even Thy Word, who was to take flesh of her most pure blood; and afterwards detaining her on earth, Thou hadst respect to the fruit which had already sprung from her, for in beholding the Humanity of the Word sitting at Thy right hand, Thou didst, so to speak, behold the flesh of Mary, which He had derived from her. And then, O Mary, what didst thou? how wert thou pleased to remain so long on earth, after the ascension of thy most sweet and most amiable Son? O, even as thou wert pleased and conformed to the Father's will, that He should hang in such torture on the cross, so thou wert conformed to it in abiding on earth without Him. And how didst thou conform thyself in beholding this great thing, the Son of the Eternal Father enduring such ignominy. O it was by looking at the great fruit which was to spring from such suffering, which fruit was ourselves, who were to fill the vacant seats of Paradise, and so much, O Mary, didst thou rejoice in this, that had it been expedient, thou wouldst even have given thyself. Behold, Mary is already elevated above the clouds, and is seen no more, a little of her splendour is alone visible!" Here she offered many creatures to the Most Holy Virgin, and was aroused from her rapture, leaving us this beautiful example of holy and pious contemplation.

CHAPTER LXI.

OF THE AUSTERITY WITH WHICH SHE MACERATED HER BODY BY VOLUNTARY PENANCES.

No enemy was so restrained and hated by our saint, as self-love and the love of her own flesh. She declared open war against them from her most tender years, refusing food excepting at the hours of dinner and supper, leaving the most delicate meats as though they disgusted her, sleeping on a straw pallet, waking in the night to give herself the discipline, and sometimes crowning her temples with thorny branches; and if she treated her delicate body with such severity whilst in the paternal house, and under the tender eye of her who with anxious care sought to preserve her from injury, when she found herself in the state and house of penance, she never seemed weary of the austerities which she began to practise. There was no small penance in her never sparing herself any labour, whether enjoined by obedience, or undertaken unasked for the benefit of her neighbour, though sometimes tired and disabled by the weakness of her body, which she could hardly drag about from her rigours, fasts, and penances. Besides the five successive years in which she only took bread and water, deducting three days from the week in which she took wine, her life seemed a continual fast. From her novitiate she gave the portresses

the breakfasts given her for herself, that they might be given to the poor, taking for herself a little wormwood. She ate very little, and that of the worst, refusing better food, with the excuse that it did not agree with her, and pretending to like what was in reality nauseous to her, that she might be commanded to take or do what was quite contrary to her taste and inclination.

So in food and seasoning she always showed the greatest relish for what was most disgusting to her, as when she had soup made of what was left by the nuns, or of warm water, as though it were of stewed meat; and though she used no small diligence in concealing her austerities from others, she could not prevent their being noticed.

Not content with exhausting her body by fasts, she tormented it by frequent disciplines, performed with such rigour that the nuns, when hearing them, ran to inform the superior, that she might give her an obedience to cease. She would gird her body with sharp cilices, besides wearing a cincture made of nails and other iron materials, with which she macerated it; and to give greater vent to the implacable hatred which she bore to her own flesh, she now struck her breast with a stone, now literally basted her arms and legs with melted wax, now for a long time struck herself with nettles. Sometimes she would bind her flesh with thongs till the blood gushed out in profusion; then, like another St. Benedict, she rolled herself on the wood, so that the

thorns and the ground were stained with her blood, not to mention her tunic, which she had resumed when Mother Vangelista del Giocondo found her.

That she might suffer cold in the winter, she only wore a single tunic, and for three years that she went barefoot she never avoided walking on ice and snow, but once remained praying on the snow in the garden, with her feet and knees bare. She was not less cruel to her feet when she wore shoes, for she filled them with the berries of the thorny juniper, that she might feel the prickles. To this tormented body she gave rest by passing the night in prayer, or if she did lay it down, by sleeping sometimes on a straw pallet for a few hours, sometimes on a box, sometimes on the bare ground, as she did for fifty nights together after her years of probation; and she rarely took off her clothes, perhaps from her anxiety to be ready in time to waken the nuns and ring matins, which she did for the space of fifteen years; and what is yet more wonderful, is the fact, that in 1602, being sick of fever, cough, and catarrh, by which she was completely debilitated, for fear of being deceived by her self-love, which might sometimes make her appear worse than she really was, she forced herself, notwithstanding her sufferings, to be present at all the exercises of the house, never remitting the least of her labours, or of her rigorous and penitential mode of life, till the year 1603, when having ruptured a blood-vessel of the chest, and many times spit blood,

she was, through the severity of the accident, obliged to take a few days' rest, after which she resumed her usual way of life, in which she persevered till the year 1604, when she became completely bed-ridden, and, as we shall see, continued so till her death.

CHAPTER LXII.

THROUGH HER GREAT DESIRE OF SUFFERING FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, SHE RENOUNCES ALL SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENT, AND GOD PROMISES HER PURE SUFFERING, WHICH SHE GENEROUSLY ENDURES IN THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE.

It is not given to all souls to desire pure suffering for the love of God, that is, interior dereliction, desolation, aridity, and the privation of all consolation, whilst at the same time the body is afflicted and pained; but our saint, enamoured with the pure love of God, and a most bitter enemy of all self-love, instructed too by the Incarnate Word, in all that He had suffered in His most sacred Passion, cross, and death, was extremely desirous of conforming herself to His body whilst living, and therefore desired and earnestly prayed for pure suffering. So greatly was this desire excited in a rapture which she had in 1602, in which the Lord appeared disposed to grant her petition, that she went full of joy to Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, a lady of great experience and goodness,

formerly her mistress of novices, much esteemed by her, and called la Santa Santorea, and told her that it seemed as though God would give her the grace of pure suffering, which she therefore besought her not to prevent by her prayers, which she considered to be most powerful with God; and having obtained her promise, she went joyfully to the choir to return thanks to the Lord. She said that she had asked and did ask for pure suffering, because she regarded herself as unworthy of all spiritual enjoyment, and desired to serve God purely, and, as she was wont to say, at her own cost. After this she had other ecstasies, raptures, and intelligences of divine things, but they were, as she declared, unattended by any sensible enjoyment. In one of them, however, she seemed to feel some faint enjoyment imparted to her, and she was heard to break out into these words: "Ah, my God, my Father, why dost Thou break Thy compact with me?" and repeating her entreaties, she was in the last rapture of her life, in 1604, assured that this would be her last abstraction of the senses, and understood that God was willing to grant her pure suffering in a severe illness, with desolation and aridity of spirit in all the exercises of devotion and piety; and then she was heard to utter these words, "O my Jesus, Thou dost will that I should become as a little child, or rather that I should be born again. O how little I must become! my souls" (she meant her subjects) "will not recognize me in my littleness." She then began to exhort all to pure suf-

fering for God, of whom she had asked it as the reward of her fidelity in His service, when she made Him the offer of herself after her five years' probation in 1590. Though the Lord did not entirely satisfy her, yet He often left her in great aridity and abandonment of spirit, so that she was constrained to use means for maintaining even a little devotion in herself, and therefore she was sometimes seen with a chaplet in her hand before the most Holy Sacrament, sometimes with little books of vocal prayer, now reading the Passion, sometimes retiring even after communion, to read the Lives of the Saints; but in all her aridity she never gave up her penances, labours, and works of charity, nor the use of the sacraments, though, through the repugnance of her senses, she did not seem to herself to go with the fitting promptitude. She said to one of her companions, "My sister, I wish you well. A soul must have actually enjoyed God, and be truly enamoured of suffering, to act in such aridity of spirit as though she were in the enjoyment of God." She had attained that perfection, but for her greater suffering God permitted her to be unconscious of it.

In 1602 she began to feel fever, which being accompanied by cough and catarrh, gradually consumed her. Still she relaxed nothing of her rigid mode of life. In the April of the following year, 1603, she ruptured a vein in the chest, and spit blood a great deal; but hardly had this ceased, when fearing to be overcome by self-love, she resumed her wonted exercises. In the

following July, having again spit blood and being attacked by high fever, she was given over by the physicians, but said herself that she should not die till she had finished her office of mistress of novices, which was the case, for on the following day she was free from fever and returned to the noviceship, and though very infirm and extremely debilitated, resumed her ordinary way of life, and so dragged on her existence till September, 1604, when the time for her holding the office of mistress of novices ended. She was then made superior, with the care of the superjuniors, but after eight days, during which she had with great zeal re-arranged many things with regard to more exact observance, she was attacked by fever, catarrh, excessive pains, and extreme weakness, and was constrained by the illness as well as by obedience to remain in bed, where, entering on her unmitigated suffering, she endured most acute and continual pains throughout her whole body, so that she seemed to be cut in pieces by razors, whilst the fever consumed her. The pains in her head were excessive, as well as those in her teeth, many of which were extracted, without, however, any diminution of suffering. Every comfort and attention was to her a burthen and annoyance, though she showed gratitude for all, remembering that her crucified Saviour, when suffering from thirst, had tasted the vinegar, and rejected the comfort of the wine mingled with myrrh. Whatever was most disagreeable to her taste she took as most pleasant, and whatever could conduce to

her comfort she generously refused, delighting in unalleviated suffering.

Nor was it a light affliction to her to stay constantly in bed, as she was naturally active and lively, and consequently felt so much wearied, that she declared that she did not think that God could have sent her a pain which would have crossed her more than this. And then she gave Him thanks for having touched her to the quick. By slow degrees her body was so much wasted, that nothing remained but her skin, muscles, and bones, which occasioned wounds by penetrating the skin. She was unable to move herself, nor could others move her from one side to the other, without causing her to suffer such intense pain, that those present were moved to tears of compassion, and could not bear to witness the sad spectacle. The physicians were amazed that a body so emaciated and martyrized could support life so long; but whilst they only gave her days, God granted her months and months, to satiate her with interior pains and sorrows, in which, finding no consolation, she said that she was no longer capable of anything but distress, affliction, and pain. Although her sufferings were so great, it was surprising to see that she was never annoyed by any one who visited her; but, on the contrary, consoled all by her words, besides instructing and teaching the super-juniors, whom she retained in her charge, though unable to fill the remainder of the office imposed on her. She gave good edification by her rare example of generous patience and conformity to the Divine

will, which she said was the fruit of the Blessed Sacrament; so that one day, having by some accident been prevented from communicating, she said to Sister Maria Angelica Santucci, who was nursing her, that she felt a great difference in bearing her illness on communion days, though in these same communions she never enjoyed any sensible consolation, notwithstanding that in this life the Blessed Sacrament is the surest spring of consolation and divine sweetness. But the Lord was pleased to keep His word with His spouse for her greater merit; and the saint, not allowing herself to be disturbed by that pure suffering, rejoiced at having acted out with generous fidelity the offering which she had made of herself to God, even to her last sigh and death itself; for she always suffered with such patience and conformity to the will of God, that, as she said, she would willingly have continued so to suffer till the day of judgment, and wished God to prolong her life, that she might suffer more; "For," added she, "in Paradise we cannot suffer for the love of God, as we can in this life; therefore I do not wish to die." And on Signor Vincenzo Puccini, her confessor, saying in her extreme sufferings, that he hoped that before her death God would alleviate them, she replied, "I ask not that of God; I ask but for patience and strength to bear them."

CHAPTER LXIII.

SHE CONTINUES IN PURE SUFFERING DURING HER LAST SICKNESS AND HOLY DEATH.

We have said that she was not entirely confined to her bed till 1604, when she was obliged by obedience to be so. Nor was she so constrained when her strength quite failed her, for her superiors, being aware that God worked in her in an extraordinary manner, did not venture to command her to keep her bed. Then those innocent limbs and every part of her body began to be torn by pains, sufferings, and catarrhs, all of which she endured with the greatest patience and tranquillity of mind, thinking that for her sins she deserved every evil, and in such humble dispositions, that one day she asked those who nursed her if they thought she would be saved. Seeing them quite bewildered by wonder she ceased to speak, but her pains ceased not. As death approached the severity of her sufferings increased, but she did not on this account cease to teach and console every one as though nothing had ailed her. For her comfort she always had a crucifix in her hand, on which she was often seen tenderly to fix her eyes.

On the 12th of May, 1607, she was so evidently worse that the confessor thought it right to give her communion in the form of Viaticum; and before receiving it she asked pardon of all

the nuns with such humility and compunction as to move all to the most tender grief. He wished also to give her Extreme Unction, which she received with ready resignation and great devotion; for though well aware that she should not die so soon, she was always delighted to conform her will and feelings to those of others. She however frankly said, that she should not die immediately, when she heard that the father-confessor would not go to Monte Senario, nine miles from Florence, for fear of not finding her alive at his return. "Let him go," she said, "and commend me to those fathers," (the hermits of the Servites) "for at his return he will find me alive." And so it was, for at the end of three days, he found her on his return in the same extremity, which moved all to compassion, excepting herself. One of her pupils seeing her suffer so much, said, "O mother mistress, it is a great thing for God to give you such daily opportunities of suffering!" "But what," said she, "if this has been my desire from my youth, and my special request after holy communion! I esteem it as a great favour and a divine grace. Know that the exercise of suffering is so precious and noble, that the Word in the bosom of the eternal Father, and abounding in the riches and delights of Paradise, inasmuch as He was without the stole of suffering, came to earth in quest of this ornament, and He was God, who could not be deceived. I have never in my life merited occasions of suffering, for I have always received good from God and creatures." Here the pupil

interrupted her, reminding her of some heavy sufferings besides the five years' probation. "All," she replied, "was a mere nothing, nor can I admit that I had pure suffering then, for I had then the enjoyment of frequent spiritual sweetness, which mitigated the severity of pain; but before I die, through the confidence which I have in the divine goodness, I trust that God will give me the grace to experience pure suffering, unmingled with any enjoyment." All vied with each other in their desire of attending on her, so consoling and useful was it to witness that peace, that rest of the heart in the will of God, under so many pains. A sister, who saw her suffering, exclaimed, "O mother, I cannot bear that God should make you suffer so much!" She was disturbed in hearing words so opposed to the will of God, and seemed to suffer more from the fault of these words than from her malady; she therefore replied with great seriousness, "Sister, whenever you are oppressed by tribulations, be careful not to separate them from their source—the will of God, otherwise they will be a heavy and insupportable burthen to you." O blessed instruction for all those souls who in this life are willing to profit by it! Mother Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia also appeared to pity her, to whom the sufferer said, "I am content with what pleases God, and from my heart I offer Him in thanksgiving every spiritual contentment, so that I may be saved," at which words the mother could not restrain her tears. Greater was the wonder and compunction she

excited when she seriously said to her confessor, "Father, do you think that I shall be saved?" "Yes, I believe and hope it," said he, "but why do you fear, and speak thus?" "Ah, Father," she replied, "it is a great thing for a creature like me, who have never done anything good, to appear before God." And yet a few days before, she had said, as Sister Maria Innocenza Dati attested, "I could not have acted otherwise than I have done, for as far as I know, I had never any other design in my actions than the honour and glory of God, and this gives me great tranquillity of heart."

On the 24th of May she became very much worse, when on the following night at seven the confessor again gave her communion; but when, after this, he would have gone on with the commendation, the saint begged him to take some rest for five hours, which he did, and returning at twelve, found her speechless, and then recited with the nuns hymns and Psalms, especially the Creed of St. Athanasius, for the consolation of the dying one, till the fourteenth hour, when he went to celebrate mass and communicate the nuns. Hardly was he arrived at the sacristy, than, whilst he was vesting for the mass, a messenger came from the mother-prioress to tell him that Sister Mary Magdalene was expiring. The confessor paused for a moment, and then, inspired to increase the merit due to the virtue of obedience, said resolutely, "Tell Sister Mary Magdalene that as she has always been obedient to me in life, so she must now be in the hour of

death, and therefore let her wait for me till I have celebrated mass and communicated the nuns." The sacristan took the message to the prioress, Mother Vangelista del Giocondo, who caused it to be heard by the holy servant of God, when, as though aroused from deep sleep, after having lost the use of speech for three hours, and breathed only at intervals of about the length of an Ave Maria, at this message she ceased to gasp, and sweetly smiling, said, "Benedictus Deus;" then taking a few restorative drops, that she might suffer longer, she waited for the confessor, who, by repeating the Commendation of the Soul and reciting Psalms and hymns, gave no small consolation to that blessed one, who at the eighteenth hour of the 25th of May, 1607, expired sweetly in most perfect peace and tranquillity, aged forty-one years, two months, and twenty-four days, having been twenty-four years, five months, and twenty-five days in religion. She expired amidst the abundant tears of all the nuns, shed not so much from sorrow at the loss of that holy soul, as for the joy and consolation arising from the firm belief that she had passed to the enjoyment of heaven.

And her happy passage was well shown by her holy countenance; for as soon as she expired, her face, from being thin and emaciated, became so lovely, blooming, and beautiful, as to inspire devotion, having in it something so angelic, that no person was weary of looking at it.

And what was still more surprising, and more fully confirmed the opinion of her sanctity, was

the fact, that one of the nuns, who till that time had felt an aversion for her, and had never given full credit to her raptures and virtues, felt herself at that moment pierced to the heart, and fully convinced that she was already received as a saint in Paradise.

CHAPTER LXIV.

OF HER OBSEQUIES, THE CONCOURSE AND DEVOTION OF THE PEOPLE, AND OF HER BURIAL.

In conformity to the usual custom, the body was decently habited by the nuns appointed, and from the hour in which she expired to the morning of the 26th, was watched by the nuns, who in turn chanted Psalms with great tenderness and devotion, some of them remaining through the night. When the report of her death spread, a great concourse of people assembled, who, led by devotion, began to take the flowers which were scattered over the body; and had not some gentlemen hastened in their piety to guard it, they would have left nothing on but the habit. To satisfy them, however, flowers were strewn repeatedly over the body, but were snatched away almost before they touched it. The grace of that countenance, which seemed to breathe sanctity, excited general astonishment. All the people declared her to be a saint, and the offices and mass being ended, the nuns, who intended to bury her, could hardly get the people away so

as to close the church doors. A few persons still remained in the church, amongst whom was Father Claudio Siripandi, S. J., and a young man of very licentious and dissolute life, in whose favour the Divine favour wrought a miracle; for whilst he was contemplating the body of the saint, the face of which was turned towards him, he suddenly saw it withdrawn from his eyes and turned on the other side, though no person had touched either the body or the bier. The young man, like one thunderstruck, changed colour. The father, who had in great amazement witnessed the fact, accosted the youth, saying, "Perhaps the saint could not endure the gaze of your eyes, your life being so scandalous and dissolute." "It is so," said the contrite and sorrowful youth, "but it shall be so no more, as you will see." He kept his word, for a few days after he found out the same father, to whom he with great feeling and desire of amendment made a general confession of his whole life, and in a few days he died, leaving good hope of his salvation.

In the meantime, to satisfy the clamours of the people, they were obliged to open the doors again, and to leave the body unburied till the evening, that all might enjoy the holy sight. And as by this time the nuns were importuned by many persons who desired relics of the saint, that is, things which she had used when living, the mothers would give nothing till they had obtained permission of the archbishop, Monsignor Alessandro Marzi Medici, who from his high opinion and esteem of the virtue and

sanctity of the deceased, was only too happy to grant it. This served greatly to increase the devotion to the saint, as the Lord was pleased by these relics to work many miracles. It being now evening, and the doors of the church being shut at eight o'clock, the body was habited, without being either opened or embalmed. Her own habit was taken off, and replaced by one of silk of the same colour as the woollen ones worn by the nuns, after which, the remains being wrapped in cere-cloth, were inclosed in a chest of wood and deposited under the high altar.

CHAPTER LXV.

OF THE FAME OF HER SANCTITY, AND OF HER BODY FOUND FRAGRANT AND INCORRUPT.

The fame of the miracles wrought by God through the intercession and relics of the saint increased every day, so that not only the citizens of Florence, but those of the neighbouring cities, flocked in crowds to visit the church of the monastery, anxiously inquiring for the place of her interment, and kneeling there in prayer. Not a few took off their shoes on entering the gates of the city, and went barefoot to the church, nor could the nuns satisfy the continual requests for relics. The devotion was still more increased by the Life of the saint, printed in 1609, and translated into various languages, and also by the report of her body having been found incorrupt

on the 27th of May, 1608, when the nuns caused it to be disinterred, having remembered that the chest had been deposited near a well, and not far from a gutter which carried off the rain-water from the roof of the church. The chest was found to be saturated with damp, the cere-cloth so rotten that it fell to pieces, and the habits moistened, but the body appeared entire and incorrupt, excepting that the face and feet were become brown, and the extremity of the nose and lower lip had turned to dust. Thus incorrupt and entire it remains to this day, and in this state was examined and approved by the holy Congregation of Rites for the solemn canonization. The flexibility of the whole body is truly surprising, for it yields to pressure, and then resumes its former appearance. The veins are still apparent in her hands and arms, and her hair preserves its natural auburn colour. The parts covered by the habits are much whiter than the face.

The spectators of this prodigy were excited to great devotion and tenderness, and the permission of the archbishop having been obtained for the removal of the relics into the monastery, the nuns found the body as entire and pliable as though she had just expired. It was clothed in new silk habits, and laid in a new temporary coffin. It was then replaced in the chamber where she had passed the five years of her illness, which was already become an oratory. The amazement and devotion increased when, eight days afterwards, the sacred remains began

from the knees upward to distil a most fragrant fluid, which could only be collected on cloths placed under, which became fragrant and stained as with oil. These were distributed to different persons, for it continued to drop from June, 1608, to June, 1620. The fragrance, however, did not cease with the liquid, but every limb exhaled it as before, and the pit of the stomach even more than the limbs. This most sweet odour resembles no other fragrance, neither that of flowers, aromatics, nor perfumed waters, as has been testified by ten physicians who on different occasions have visited the body, and have declared that the incorruption, the fluid, and the odour can only be supernatural and miraculous. The miracle was approved by the Sacred Rota, and then by the Congregation of Rites, for the beatification, and, subsequently, for the solemn canonization, a new process having been made in 1663, at which time the odour was more extensively diffused. This prodigy caused the citizens to honour the day of her holy death in 1609, by a great concourse of people, among whom went the Most Serene Princes, who for many days visited from devotion the sacred remains, as did also Ferdinand, Cardinal and subsequently Duke of Mantua, as well as a great number of cardinals, princes, and nobles at other times, which increased the fame of the saint, and the esteem and veneration with which she was regarded.

CHAPTER LXVI.

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE SAINT DURING HER LIFE.

The miracles performed by the saint during her life and after her death, being narrated at large in the Lives already published, I shall only mention them here, to preserve the integrity of the narration, that I may subsequently enlarge more on those by which the Lord has glorified His saint after her beatification.

The first miracle by which God honoured her during her life, was that performed on the person of Sister Fede di Riccio, a lay-sister of the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, who for four months had been confined to her bed by severe pain, arising from contraction of the muscles. Her left side was shorter than the right by a palm, and she was incapable of moving either her head or her hands, so that her case was considered hopeless by the physician, Giovanni Fedeli. In 1587 she was visited by the saint, who made the sign of the cross over her with an image of the Blessed Virgin, when she immediately felt herself free from pain, and completely restored; she began to move, took her supper, was refreshed by her sleep, and on the following morning rose, and went to her work, nor did she ever suffer from a similar attack, as the saint predicted on the day of her

cure. In 1596 Sister Caterina Chelli, of the same monastery, was in danger, either of death or of amputation, from a sore in the arm. The saint, having removed all the plaisters and applications, bound it up and healed it completely. In obedience to the reverend Father Agostino Campi, the confessor, she, by the sign of the cross, delivered Caterina di Carlo Spina, who was possessed by an evil spirit.

By the same sign of the cross, she changed two casks of wine that had become sour, into excellent wine, the first in the year 1588, and the second in 1602.

By the same sign, in 1591, she in an instant cured Sister Cherubina Rabatti of a wound considered incurable by the physician, Giovanni Fedeli, and the surgeon, Roberto Cupers, who were in amazement when they saw their patient so perfectly restored.

Nor was the recovery of Sister Pace Colombini less wonderful. Her left side had been deprived of motion and sensation by an apoplectic seizure, but, on being signed with the cross by the saint, she, on the first day, regained the power of motion, on the second day sensation, and on the third day she sprang from her bed completely cured.

The same thing occurred to Sister Maria Angelica Santucci, who was attacked by fever, so violent as to occasion delirium, and such nausea of the stomach, that she could retain no food. The saint gave her a little wine, and on the first two mornings, she felt herself relieved,

but on the third, the fever and every other ailment ceased, and she remained perfectly well.

Nor were her prayers of less efficacy, as was experienced by the same Sister Cherubina Rabatti, who was about to have the actual cautery applied for fistula lacymosa, and who, in her excessive pain, called for the saint, and recommended herself to her prayers. The latter raised her eyes and fixed them on heaven, and at the same time the sufferer felt her face pressed with such force, that she fainted from the intensity of the pain, but on reviving, found herself completely cured, to the astonishment of the physicians who attended her. They were no less surprised at the cure of Sister Caterina Ginori, who in the year 1602, was greatly afflicted by the stone, without experiencing any relief from the medical treatment. Being reduced to extremity, she said to the saint, "O Sister Mary Magdalene, pray to the Lord to mitigate these pains, that I may not despair!" Instantly, either in alarm or tenderness, the saint fell on her knees before a little altar, and the patient slept for about the space of an Ave Maria, when on awaking she found herself quite well and without pain. "O Sister Mary Magdalene," she exclaimed, "what have you done!" "Nothing," replied she; "I have only prayed for you." "Now, then," said the restored sister, "let us sing the Te Deum." In April 1590, she also, as she was requested, prolonged the life of the Reverend Agostino Campi, the confessor, who was already in his agony. When provisions failed the

cooks had recourse to the prayers of the saint, and saw the articles of food multiply in their hands.

In 1592 Sister Cherubina Rabatti being reduced by fever and wounds in the back to Extreme Unction, was carried to lie on the straw pallet on which the saint slept. This was quite enough, for her wounds were healed, and she returned without assistance to her cell, perfectly well and strong. Sister Mary Magdalene Mori also, in the most severe pains of gout, hearing that the saint was in ecstasy, caused herself to be carried to the place where the saint was, and was completely relieved by merely touching her; nor did she ever again suffer from that malady.

Sister Maria Benigna Orlandini, and Sister Barbara Bassi, could also bare witness to the ardent charity of the saint, when she completely and permanently healed their leprosy, a disease declared to be incurable, by licking their revolting skin with her tongue. And, during her life, it was a frequent marvel to see her work and paint with her eyes bandaged and the shutters closed whilst she was rapt in ecstasy. For though many of these occurrences were concealed, all could not be so, so that the renown of our saint, whom God had glorified by so many miracles, increased; and we shall see that after her death, He was pleased to render her still more illustrious.

CHAPTER LXVII.

MIRACLES PERFORMED BY OUR SAINT AFTER DEATH.

In August 1607 Signora Maria de' Rovai, who for sixteen months had been confined to her bed by continued fever, was so much reduced as to be unable to turn in her bed, and was advised to recommend herself to the saint, then recently dead. She took a bunch of flowers which had touched the body of the saint, and applying it to her stomach, recommended herself to her prayers. She fell asleep, and on awaking found herself in a short time completely free from fever and debility.

The same lady, Maria de' Rovai, also applied some flowers which had touched the body of the saint to the feet and arms of her son, Lorenzo, who had been so badly treated for carious bones, that the surgeons had decided on amputating the feet. In a few days he was cured and able to walk without help, though for three years before he had been incapable of taking a step.

When the veil used by the saint was spread over Elisabetta Corradi, a little girl attacked by dangerous malignant fever, it caused her instantly to exclaim, "Mamma, I have nothing the matter with me, and I wish to sleep a little." She fell asleep directly, not having closed her eyes for two whole days and nights before; and after sleeping for about half an hour, awoke quite

well, and was found by the physicians entirely free from fever.

In 1613 Signora Maria Rovai, had been for three months confined to her bed by fever, which had reduced her to extreme weakness and emaciation. After spreading the veil of the saint over her person, she felt herself suddenly revived and free from fever, and on the following morning went to mass, as though she had had no illness.

Antonio Partigliano was given over in a malignant fever and an affection of the chest. He commended himself to the saint, whose veil he placed on his head, by which means he obtained some sleep, during which the saint appeared to him, saying, "Seek the water of my well." In his dream he seemed to do so, but without success, and therefore answered, "I cannot find it." "Search well," replied the saint, "and you will find it," and with these words she disappeared. On awaking he repeated his dream to his attendants, who sent immediately to procure some water from the well in which the saint was wont to bathe her arms, and the water of which she poured into her bosom in her ecstatic ardours. No sooner had he taken some of this water, than he was relieved and revived in such a manner, that the physicians regarded his entire cure as miraculous. They thought the same of the cure of Signor Pietro Alli, who being afflicted by severe pain and fever, on applying the veil of the saint, felt as though he were released from chains, and was restored to health.

Alessandra Castellani had been given over by the medical men from a disease of the chest, and her friends lamented her as already dead, for she had received the last sacraments, and had lost the use of speech, when they placed on her a small piece of the saint's band, telling her to recommend herself to her. She slept for the space of three Credos, and on awaking exclaimed, "I am no longer ill," and instantly rose from her bed perfectly cured, to the amazement of the physicians, and still more of the confessor, who had given her the sacraments.

In her illness the saint used a small feather-pillow, which being sent in 1617 to Madalena Stella, reduced by an obstinate pain in the side to such extremity, as to have received the Viaticum, it was no sooner applied to the affected part, with a little prayer to the saint, than the pain abated, and the patient obtained some sleep, from which she awoke completely cured.

Signora Maria Rovai, by applying this same pillow in faith, was in 1611 cured of dangerous fever; she felt such instantaneous ease and restoration of strength, that rising from her bed, she sang the Te Deum with her family, and wrote to the nuns an account of the miracle.

Signora Caterina Rossi, who was all but distracted by excessive pains in the stomach, found no relief from medicine, being able to take very little rest or food, and was in consequence wasted to such a degree, that she looked like a corpse. A little of the saint's habit applied to

her stomach availed her so much, that after sleeping she awoke perfectly well.

The illness of Madalena di Piero Rondoni, was also declared to be incurable, she having for six years laboured under continued fever, attended by general pain and vomiting. A small piece of the saint's habit awakened her devotion, and she applied it to her stomach, vowing to visit the tomb of the saint, to confess and communicate, and to fast on Fridays for a whole year. Her pains and fever left her immediately, she slept during the night, and on the following morning rose from her bed with her strength perfectly restored.

The favour shown to Antonio Mattei, in 1610, was also very wonderful. Having been severely wounded in the left side, the surgeons on examination declared his case to be hopeless, for the wound having reached the lungs, the internal bleeding not only occasioned pain sufficient in itself to cause death, but also deterred them from attempting any operation, lest the patient should die under their hands. Being, however, urged to make a trial, they would do nothing till the sufferer had made his confession and received the holy oil, with the recommendation of his soul to God; and then they prepared the dressings and began the operation, without the slightest hope of his surviving. But on the following day they found him alive, and so much better, that to their utter amazement the wound was healed and the pain gone, which was to be attributed to some threads of a sheet, which

had been used by the saint, and which had been put in the dressings, with a suggestion to the sick man to recommend himself to her prayers. He did so, and his life was, in consequence, preserved.

In many cases a simple recommendation and invocation of the saint, were sufficient to obtain the desired favour. Signora Maria de Rossi had, for ten successive years, been so much afflicted by violent pains in the head, that at last she was almost unable either to move or to speak. As she had found no relief from any remedy which had been tried, in 1612, finding her pains greatly increased, she resolved to invoke the assistance of the saint, making a vow that in case of her cure, she would carry a silver head to her tomb, and recite every day some Paters and Aves in her honour. She had hardly pronounced the vow, when the pain ceased, nor did she ever after suffer from it.

The same lady, after three years, was tormented by an affliction of the middle finger of her hand, which occasioned the loss of the nail, and a swelling which extended up the arm. She made a vow to visit the tomb of the saint seven times, and to carry a silver hand. Her arm was immediately relieved from pain, and the swelling subsided without the application of any remedy whatever.

On the contrary, many remedies had been used by Signor Gio. Battista Rossi, but without giving him any relief whatever, as he was continually attacked by pains in the heart, with

violent palpitations. He perspired, fainted, and raved in such a manner, as to excite extreme compassion in those who heard him, and saw him so tormented. He promised to carry a silver heart to the tomb of the saint, and to perform some devotions in her honour. No sooner had he made the vow, than the saint heard him favourably, for the pain of the heart instantly ceased, and he was never after liable to those dangerous attacks.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

OF THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SAINT, AND THE OIL MIRACULOUSLY INCREASED.

The daily increasing celebrity of the miracles which it pleased God to work through the intercession of the saint, His servant, increased also the devotion of the people, wherefore the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli were induced to procure her beatification from Paul V. The Most Serene Duke of Mantua, Ferdinand, then Cardinal, was only too happy to present a petition to that effect, as he was devoted to the saint, and had seen her incorrupt and fragrant body.

The Sovereign Pontiff having received the petitions and instances of their Most Serene Highnesses of Florence, and of some cardinals, and the supplications of the nuns, in 1610 told the Lord Cardinal to write to Monsignor Ales-

sandro Marzi Medici, Archbishop of Florence, giving him his (the Pope's) permission to make the first process of information. Monsignor, the Archbishop, lost no time, and in 1611 made a full process of a hundred and eight witnesses to the sanctity and miracles of the admirable servant of God, which was forwarded to Rome, and presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, by whom the revision was committed to Signor Cardinal Alessandro Orsini; but hardly was the charge entrusted to him, when he was obliged to leave Rome for the legation of Urbino; so that the cause was in abeyance, and the processes were not revised till the year 1624; when in consequence of new instances made to his Holiness, Urban VIII, Cardinal Orsini revised the processes, and made his report to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in which he declared that the cause might be proceeded with; and the Sacred Congregation having accordingly referred the matter to the Pope, his Holiness was pleased to declare, that the cause should proceed in the usual forms, and by his private autograph, he committed it to three auditors of the Rota, namely, Monsignor Gio. Battista Coccino, Dean, Monsignor Alfonso Mazanedo, and Monsignor Filippo Pirovano, who immediately dispatched remissorial letters to Monsignor the Archbishop of Florence, and to the Canons Andrea del Tovaglia and Alessandro Strozzi, that they should assist at the processes as judges subdelegate. The processes being made in due juridical form, were sealed up and sent to the Lords

Judges at Rome, who having opened them, and being satisfied of their validity and relevancy, as regarded the sanctity and miracles, thought fit by new remissorial letters to authorize the same judges to make a visit to the body, for the greater and more authentic proof of the incorruption, odour, and liquor above-named. This visit was made in the presence, and under the examination of six physicians, given in the process. The judges therefore, being more fully assured of the facts, declared that the servant of God might not only be beatified but canonized. The report of this their judgment being made at length by Monsignor Coccino, Dean, and signed by all three, was presented to the Pope, who commanded that it should be presented by the same judges to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which it was on the 28th of March, 1626. The Congregation having deputed Cardinal Pio as promoter of the cause, summoned Monsignor Antonio Cerri as promoter of the faith, to contradict and oppose, and having in three congregations examined the validity of the processes, and the relevancy of the virtues and miracles wrought during life and after death, declared to his Holiness, that if it pleased him, he might canonize, and in the meantime beatify her; and their most Serene Highnesses of Tuscany, and the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli, having renewed their petitions, his Holiness by a brief given on the 8th of May, 1626, declared our saint blessed, and permitted her office to be said in Rome in the church of St. John of

the Florentines for the first year, and in all the churches of Florence in perpetuity.

By another brief of the 13th of April, 1627, this permission was extended to the whole Carmelite order, and all priests were allowed to celebrate the mass of the Common of Virgins in all the churches of that order. The feast was solemnly celebrated at Rome in the church of St. John of the Florentines, with a great concourse of people; but it was celebrated with still greater concourse and solemnity in the church of the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli, where for eight successive days the body of the saint was exposed on the altar to the view of the people. And this solemnization was approved by Heaven, for the mothers having determined on making a most splendid festival, a beautiful design was made for the ceiling of the large chapel of the church, which represented a Paradise, with angels on clouds, illuminated by the reflection of concealed lights, in the midst of which was placed the image of the saint. As the feast was to commence from the first vespers of the day of decease, that is, from the 24th of May, the two lay-sisters of the monastery, who were appointed to supply the lamps with oil, going to the place where the oil was kept, one of them went to the jar which was then in use, all the others being full, to draw from it about seven or eight pitcherfuls of oil that remained, when, on raising the cover, to her astonishment, not to say terror, she found it full to the brim, so that it seemed about to overflow. Nor was her companion less bewil-

dered; and as no other persons ever went to that room, and as no oil had been introduced into the house, they believed that the saint had miraculously increased it, and the more so, as, after taking away eight flasks, eight more the next day, and four more on the following days, they saw that during the eight days of the feast it did not diminish, but that at the close of the octave it diminished in proportion to the quantity drawn. They mentioned the fact, and their own belief respecting it; and though at first they were not credited, yet when the mother-prioress and the confessor took particular notice, and saw that the oil really did not diminish, they accepted the miracle, and gave orders that no more of that oil should be applied to the use of the house, but that it should be preserved as miraculous; and having caused the remainder to be measured, they found sixteen flasks, and calculated that fifty flasks had been drawn, which with the sixteen remaining, made sixty-six, the jar not holding more than forty-five, so that the miracle was clearly proved, as was affirmed by nine theologians, after a rigorous examination on oath in a congregation called for the purpose by the archbishop, it having pleased Heaven to approve the merits of the saint, and the declaration of her glory made by the Sovereign Pontiff. This occurrence was afterwards examined for the solemn canonization of the saint, and approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, as a very conspicuous miracle; and the more so, as by this same oil it has pleased the

divine Majesty to work other miracles neither few nor small.

A most surprising and glorious miracle, approved by the Sacred Congregation, occurred at the end of the month of August, 1654, in which year the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli in Florence being greatly inconvenienced by the scarcity of oil, Sister Carita, one of the lay-sisters who had the charge of the store-room, was inspired to take a little of the increased oil, and agreed with Sister Obedienza, another lay-sister, her companion in the service of the refectory, to whom the same thought had occurred, to put a little into the jars in which the oil was kept for the use of the monastery. They did so, taking about an ounce of that oil in a glass, and repeating on their knees a Pater and an Ave, and placing behind one of the jars an image of the saint, they put a little of the oil in each jar, beseeching the saint that the oil might last till the gathering time, for the good of that monastery, the welfare of which had been always so near her heart during her life.

These good lay-sisters did this in full faith, and the saint corresponded to their devotion, for though they every week drew from thirteen to fourteen flasks for the service of the church, both exterior and interior, for the lights of the monastery, the lamps of the nuns, and culinary purposes, till the feast of the Nativity of our Lady, on which day the olive-gathering begins, yet they never saw it diminish in the jar from whence they drew it. The Nativity being over,

the new oil came, and as the procurator still continued to use the miraculous oil, it diminished in proportion to what she drew out, but even to the very bottom was perfectly clear, which was in itself no small miracle.

CHAPTER LXIX.

MANY MIRACLES PERFORMED BY THE OIL MIRACULOUSLY INCREASED AT THE FESTIVAL OF THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SAINT.

In the year 1660 all the wine in the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, amounting to more than two hundred casks, began to turn sour, so that on trying the wine, it was found to have lost its colour and flavour, and as the weather had become warm, one of the casks of wine was entirely spoiled. Notice of this having been given by the steward to the cellarer and by her to the superior, they were resolved to have recourse to the saint, at the suggestion of the steward, who knew not what else to recommend. "Recommend yourselves to the saint," said he, "for there is need of her help." It suddenly occurred to the superior to put a little of the miraculous oil called by these good nuns, "The Oil of the Saint," into each cask, and on the following evening she, accompanied by two other mothers, went into the cellar, carrying with them some of the oil, and the same picture which the saint during her life had used in making the

sign of the cross over a butt of sour wine which was cured by her prayers. Kneeling down, they made a short prayer, entreating the saint to help them in their necessity. They then made the holy sign with the same picture on all the casks, dropping in three drops of the oil, repeating their prayers to the saint that the wine might be restored to its former condition. Having done this, they went away. At the end of three days the steward again tapped the casks, and found all the wine restored to its former flavour and colour, so that going out he said to the cellarer and the procuratrix, "What have you done? This wine is not what it was before." The mothers said nothing to the steward of the remedy employed, but acquainted the superior with its success; who, with all the mothers, gave thanks to God for the favour shown to the community, who were not only well provided for their own use, but could also sell the remainder of the wine without difficulty, and at a good price.

In the year 1663 Sister Angela Maria Anselmi, a nun in the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, was confined to her bed by an abscess in the knee, which had lamed her from childhood and during the succeeding years of her life, and which by frequent discharges and acute pain rendered her incapable of walking. The last gathering especially had been attended by strong inflammation, and with such severe and constant pain, as to render the limb useless, so that the physicians, as they deposed in the examination,

considered the malady incurable. As the feast of the saint drew near, and the medical men had given up the use of unavailing remedies, the inflammation and spasms still continuing, she was very anxious on the 23rd of May, and indeed before had frequently requested, to be carried before the tomb of the saint, to entreat her to obtain for her either patience or a cure. But though the superior and infirmarian were willing to console her, they were in no small perplexity as to the means of doing so, for motion always increased the flow of humours to the part affected. They on that day tried every means of removing her from her bed, and by placing her on a chair with pulleys, and holding up the affected part, enabled her to move. The experiment gave her great pain, but she said that she was most ready and willing to suffer it, could she only be taken before the saint. They replaced her on the bed, determined to take her on the morning of the feast. The next day, which was the 24th and the vigil, she communicated in bed, to dispose herself for the favour which she desired to obtain. During the day she renewed her entreaties to Sister Maria Minima Strozzi to anoint the afflicted part with the oil of the saint, of which she had a small phial by her. It grew late, and the patient no longer expected her, when about nine o'clock in the evening, Sister Maria Minima went to her cell, and having offered a short prayer with her, anointed the painful knee. She had ceased to do so for about the space of a Credo, when the patient began to feel a

gentle warmth excited, which gave her ease and refreshment, and feeling a sensation of gushing she applied to it her hand, when she at first felt it strongly. The tumour, however, continued to diminish, the inflammation subsided, and in about twenty minutes she found the limb quite free from swelling, which it had not been for seventeen years previous, and every movement easy to her. She rose in bed and gave thanks to the saint, feeling herself completely cured, having no pain, nor any difficulty whatever in extending the leg. She thought of going to the tomb of the saint, and would have done so, had she not remembered that the constitutions forbade her to go out at night at irregular hours; therefore resolving to go early in the morning, she laid herself on her bed to sleep, but not being able to do so, she thought of what had happened, and it occurred to her, that possibly natural oil might be able to produce the same effect, and yielding either to curiosity or temptation, she took a little oil from a small lamp which hung before her bed and anointed her knee, when instantly, in punishment for her want of faith, she felt it throb, and the swelling returned with the same rigidity and agony of pain. Her confusion and remorse, and the tears which she shed, are not to be described; and believing that she must lie in her bed a cripple for life, she passed the night in the greatest distress at having lost in one moment the blessing so much desired. In the morning the infirmarian came to ask if she still wished to be taken to visit the body of the

saint, and on her answering, "Yes," she felt her confidence in the saint revived; and desiring that some of the miraculous oil might be brought her, she anointed her knee with two or three drops, when, behold, a renewal of the miracle! She again felt the glow, the swelling of the knee entirely subsided, and it was fit for any motion; so that when the infirmarians came, who were to assist in carrying her, she herself rose from her bed, and being habited, set out herself without any assistance, to the amazement of all, and walked with entire freedom, without feeling the least weakness. On her arrival at the chapel, being placed before the holy body, she bent her knee without difficulty, prostrated herself on the bare ground, and there heard three masses, without leaning on anything. In the course of the day she also assisted at vespers, standing without any pain or fatigue, to the amazement of the surgeons and physicians, who had so long had her in their care. All agreed that this was a great miracle, not only because the relief from pain was instantaneous, and the effect of the blessed and common oil so very different, but because after having been so long a cripple in bed, the long walk which she took to the chapel of the saint, and her remaining on her knees for so long a time, would naturally have increased rather than diminished the tumour, instead of causing it to vanish, leaving her in perfect health, which she enjoyed then, and does still enjoy, being occupied in all the exercises of the monastery.

In the year 1643 Pietro Caravita, privy-counsellor, was seized by high fever, sharp pains at the heart, difficulty of breathing, spitting blood and pus, with such an extreme prostration of strength, as to be given over by the physicians. His wife, Donna Portia, sent to the Carmelite convent of Santa Maria della Vita, desiring Fra. Alberto Calaccio to come to her, and earnestly besought him to anoint the part affected by the pain. The father acceded to her request, after having made a short prayer and invocation of the saint. No sooner was Signor Pietro anointed with the oil, than the spitting, fever, and pain ceased. The patient declared that he was cured, and rising from his bed went to supper with the rest of the family, and in gratitude for the favour received, sent a lamp to the church of Santa Maria della Vita.

In the same year, 1643, Giovanni Salgrado of Madrid, was given over by the physicians as incurable. Vincenzo Carbini heard of his case, and having brought with him from Florence a small bottle of the oil of the saint, he paid him a visit, and invoking the patronage of St. Mary Magdalene, anointed him with the oil. He immediately fell asleep, and on awaking found himself so much better, that on being recalled the physicians unanimously acknowledged that the recovery could only have been miraculous, more especially when in a few days he became perfectly well. Now the report of this miraculous occurrence being widely spread, and a little son of Luigi, a Florentine, having such a serious

hernia, that the surgeons, after an unsuccessful operation, had given up his case as hopeless; his mother, trusting to find a remedy in the renowned oil of the saint, went to the said Vincenzo Carbini, and having received a few drops, anointed her little son, commending him to the saint, when he instantly grew better, and in a very short time recovered completely.

Gabriello di Antonio Ciori, a countryman, had for eight months been confined to his bed, incapable of moving any part of his body excepting the left hand. He had received from a lay-sister of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, a little of the oil of the saint, and besought the rector of San Giuliano, at Cascia, the Reverend Bartolomeo Francesco Durante, at whose house he lived, to anoint him with the oil of the saint, without using any other remedy. Immediately he began to recover miraculously, and soon became perfectly well, as the same rector deposed.

Paula, daughter of Francesco and Caterina Verdi, was in 1660 afflicted by a small tumour in the breast, which her mother, supposing it to be of no consequence, did not show to any medical man. However, as it increased to the size of a walnut, she showed it to a surgeon, who declared it to be scrofulous, and ordered a plate of lead to be applied, which greatly reduced it, but after some days it suppurated, and discharged a quantity of matter, like old mortar, (calcinaccio.) The surgeon then told the mother that she could apply a plaister with red ointment. The mother punctually did this

for two years, but the malady increased, the wound having become very large, and Calderini, Grand Master of the Surgeons, to arrest its progress, at four different times applied three balls of caustic. Some operations were performed, and they were successively extracted. The fourth time, of two balls they could only extract one, so that the breast began to swell, and the disease exceedingly increased, with such excessive pain that the surgeons gave her over, thinking she would die of spasms. Then Caterina, her mother, recommending her to the saint, anointed the wounded part with her oil, and the swelling instantly began to subside, a great deal of matter was discharged, and a small piece of bone, with the ball of caustic; but the wound still remained unclosed, and was exasperated by the application of I know not what ointment. The mother, therefore, was advised to apply again to the saint, and to procure a little more of her oil. She did so, and the wound after a few days' anointing, was perfectly healed, and she acknowledged the favour shown her by the saint.

In 1658 Don Venantio Muzio Piovano di San Vittorino, of Castello Ploraco in the Contado di Camerino, was attacked by a malignant fever, supposed to be dangerous. He had recourse to the intercession of the saint, anointing himself with her oil. He had hardly time to repeat a Miserere, when he was free from fever, and to the no small surprise of the physician who attended him, became perfectly well. He sent

an authentic account of the favour received to the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli in Florence.

In the month of August, 1660, all the grain in the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, as well the old as the new, became heated, and so spoiled as to breed worms, and that in such quantities that it all turned to dust. This occurred to many bushels, and every remedy was unavailing, so that they were in imminent danger of being without corn, as it all pulverized. The mothers wisely thought that they would have recourse to the intercession of the saint, and taking her picture to the place where the corn was kept, they made the sign of the cross with it on every sack, making at the same time a cross with her oil, and with earnest prayers entreating that she would obtain from God the preservation of that corn. Neither their prayer nor the corn was wasted, for the corn instantly cooled, and to their great comfort they saw no more worms, and they all gave thanks to her who had so tenderly protected their house. She also clearly manifested her protection in the years 1663 and 1664, by restoring to exquisite flavour a large quantity of bad eggs. At the end of March and beginning of April 1664, the procuratrix had laid up about 1200 eggs, for the use and consumption of the community, when at the end of May she discovered that a great number was spoiled, appearing stained and black on the outside, and already smelling badly, so that to her great distress she was

obliged to throw many away. Being much vexed and disturbed at this, she determined on recommending the matter to the saint, so taking some cotton dipped in the miraculous oil, and anointing the eggs in different places, as they lay on the shelf, she said a prayer and went away. Some days after, she returned for some eggs required by the cook, and found them all clean, transparent, no longer black, nor even of a bad colour, to the admiration of the cook, who guessing the truth, did not cease to thank the saint, who had procured them such beautiful eggs in the months of May and June; and having preserved and given some away, it pleased God to work miracles by them.

Signora Maria Madalena Gondi had been for many days afflicted with excessive pain, without finding the least relief from medicine. On being anointed with the oil of the saint by her brother Monsignor Banaccorsi, bishop of Colle, she instantly felt her pain alleviated; but as it did not entirely cease, Monsignor sent her one of the eggs which had been restored by the saint, and the invalid ordered it to be poached, when, though many months had passed since its restoration, it proved to be as good as when fresh laid. No sooner had she taken it, than she became entirely well, the pain ceased, and in acknowledgment of the favour received from the saint, she visited her tomb, and there caused a mass to be celebrated.

Signora Francesca Dei had been very ill for forty hours successively, and was reduced to

extreme weakness, but having received from a Carmelite Father, Marsilio Ronconi, one of the eggs which had been restored through the intercession of the saint, she had it boiled in the shell, and took it with perfect confidence in the saint. She immediately felt herself perfectly well, and in gratitude ordered all her medicines to be given away in charity, and made a visit to the relics of the saint.

In 1665 Madalena di Francesco Chiari was attacked by erysipelas in the head, which caused it to swell frightfully, and fever coming on, even her very eyes became swollen, and so painful that she was obliged to keep them entirely closed, and she was quite unable to sleep, so that the physicians and others thought that she would either die or become blind. She commended herself to the prayers of the saint, whilst Antonio Tornai, the steward of the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, anointed her eyes with the miraculous oil. No sooner was she anointed, than she felt the pain abated, the swelling of the eyes subsided, and on opening them she was able to see clearly, and has done so ever since, to the amazement of all who had seen her, as they believed her to be entirely blind. She acknowledged the favour conferred on her by the saint, and in testimony of her gratitude visited and caused a mass to be said at her tomb.

In 1664 Sister Angela Cecilia Nardi, of the monastery of Monte Domini, in Florence, was affected by a complaint in the breast, which

from its symptoms, and the severe pain which it occasioned, was supposed by the physicians to be dangerous. For two years she had only taken simple purgative medicines, refusing any other remedy; but, led by a lively faith, she asked for a little of the oil of the saint, hoping to obtain health by her means. One evening, as she was suffering most torturing pain, the mother-abbess caused the tumour to be anointed with the oil, when the pain instantly abated and became tolerable. On the second evening it ceased entirely, and on the third the tumour itself disappeared, leaving nothing but a little lump no larger than a lentil, which amazed the physicians, who, on being informed of the circumstance, told her that if she had made any vow, she should accomplish it as soon as possible, as she had received a supernatural favour. In acknowledgment, she sent to have a mass celebrated at the place where the body of the saint rests, with a donation of ten pounds of wax.

CHAPTER LXX.

MIRACLES WROUGHT AND GRACES CONFERRED THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAINT, AND BY THE APPLICATION OF HER RELICS, AND THE INVOCATION OF HER NAME AND ASSISTANCE.

In the year 1640 Donna Maria Angela Gorini, professed sister of the convent of the Muratte, in Florence, had for three years suffered from gutta

serena in the right eye, so that when the other eye was closed, she could not distinguish day from night. She also began to suffer weakness of sight in the left eye, so that she could not discern objects at more than two or three yards' distance. She was placed in the hands of physicians, who used every means for the preservation of the left eye, knowing the right to be incurable. For three months all remedies were unsuccessfully tried, the sight of the patient becoming daily worse, till losing all hope of relief from human means, she determined on having recourse to the saint, and earnestly begged for her veil, which was sent to her in a box, but came so late in the day that the abbess could not sign her with it.

The sufferer had it placed on her bed, and passed the night in greater pain than usual, without being able to take any rest. She, consequently, most fervently implored the intercession of the saint, many times invoking her, with the intention, should she regain her health, to fast, with the permission of her superior, on the vigil of her feast, and also to have a mass celebrated at her tomb, presenting a votive offering of silver. Towards the eleventh hour of the day, the infirmarian carried some syrup to the patient, and found her suffering excessively, her eyes being more closed and inflamed than ever. She comforted her and went away, and as soon as she was gone, Donna Maria fell asleep, and slept quietly for half an hour. On awaking she opened her eyes, and thought she saw the light

which was in the cell, which before she had never seen. To assure herself of this, she called the infirmarian, and having caused the light to be brought, was convinced that she had regained her sight both in the one and in the other eye, and exclaimed with delight, "I see! Praised be God, and St. Mary Magdalene! Call the mother-abbess!" The abbess, to assure herself of the fact, caused her to read, which she had before been unable to do. In acknowledgment of the miraculous favour, she entoned the Te Deum Laudamus. The veil being then applied, the patient thought that her restored sight became more perfect. At the expiration of an hour she went to hear mass in good health, and the physicians, Gello Gelli and Tiberio Faggi, who deposed to the fact, regarded it as a striking miracle.

In the month of March, 1644, Lorenzo Passerini was taken seriously ill with a continued fever, which lasted three months, and yielded to no remedy whatever. He begged and obtained the veil of the saint, and felt his faith revive when it was placed on him. He kept it on for the space of three Credos, and after feeling some shivering sensations throughout his body, the pain abated, and in four days he was well, acknowledging the favour granted him by the saint.

In the year 1661 the Rev. Pier Francesco Socci, rector of the church of San Andrea at Rovezzano, was attacked by malignant fever and supposed to be in danger. He wished for the veil of

the saint, which was brought him, and in two days he was perfectly cured.

In the year 1652 Tommasa di Pier Pallini was afflicted by excessive pains in the stomach, which extended over the whole system. It seemed to her as though fire were running through her veins, and she felt such sharp piercing pains, that their intensity made her scream, rave, and beat herself on the ground, as though she were torn by pincers. This was her daily torment, and it returned many times in a day. She had endured it for the space of three years, all medicines being useless; and the case was given up by the physicians as hopeless, as they supposed it to arise from a complication of diseases. Months passed on of incessant pain, and remedies were only tried to be giving up as useless, when her brother, Tommaso Pallini, brought her one of the saint's veils. She took it with great veneration and faith, and applying it to her stomach, recommended herself to the saint, that she might obtain the cure so much desired. She began to feel better, and in eight days was completely free from her pains, which never afterwards returned.

Most singular was the favour also granted to one Antonio Ricci, at Campi, who had suffered for three years, from three imposthumes in the stomach, without obtaining the slightest relief from medicine. So excessive was his pain that he could not rest a moment, either lying down, sitting, or standing, so that as he could find no place, time, nor manner, in which he

could repose, he was given over by many physicians. His wife, Margarita, most afflicted and worn by constant fatigue and anxiety respecting the management of her house, went to the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli to be consoled by her foster-sister, Maria, a lay-sister of that house, to whom she related her husband's affliction. The nun recommended him to the saint, and promised to pray for him, exhorting her also to be devoted to the saint, and giving her a piece of her habit. Margarita, believing that she had found a treasure, carried it away with the greatest devotion and reverence, firmly believing that her husband would be cured. She was not deceived, for on the application of the relic, she found the pain lessened, sleep returned to the sick man, and she perceived that the wounds were closing, so that at the end of eight days he was perfectly cured, and went to Florence to visit the chapel and body of the saint, causing three masses to be said in gratitude, and leaving with the mothers a declaration of the miraculous cure, subscribed by three witnesses. Up to the present time, 1669, he has never had any ailment whatever. Nor did the favours of the saint stop here, for Margarita, having made a little reliquary for the relic, that Antonio might wear it more conveniently, he inadvertently lost it. He left no means of finding it untried, carefully searching every place over again, in the deepest sorrow for his loss. But he did not on this account cease to recommend himself to the saint, who after three weeks,

when Antonio was breakfasting with some other peasants in the country, caused him to see his dog running towards him at a great distance, with the reliquary in his mouth, which he directly laid down at the feet of Antonio, who instantly knelt and gave thanks to God and to the saint, who had so wonderfully made this dog the depository of her holy relic.

In 1660 Teresa Mormorai ne' Landini was afflicted by a most violent fever, which afterwards turned to a tertian ague, but of so dangerous a character, that it never left her entirely free, but every successive attack found her scarcely recovered from that which had preceded it. She took many remedies, but without obtaining the smallest relief, so that she was reduced to such weakness as to be unable to stand. In consequence of this illness, she was suddenly attacked by high fever and delirium. An aunt who came to visit her while thus afflicted, advised her to have recourse to the intercession of our saint, and to ask for her veil. Her husband, Christoforo Landini, went for it on the 3rd of January, 1661, about five months from the commencement of the illness, and brought with it a small jar filled with the oil of the saint. As he set his foot in the room, on his return with the relics, she felt her illness lessened, and took a little of the oil, and spreading the veil over her, waited for the intermission of the fever, which never returned, and the restored invalid acknowledged the favour received through the merits of the saint, and went on

foot to visit her body, causing three masses to be celebrated at her tomb.

In 1662 Signor Domenico Federighi was attacked by malignant fever, and as the physicians hardly entertained a hope of his recovery, his lady had withdrawn, and was weeping for him as for one already dead. At the twenty-fourth hour the veil of the saint was taken to him, and at two the fever completely left him, so that the nurses ran to the weeping wife, saying, "Lady, he whom you bewail as dead, is already quite free from fever." He acknowledged the favour of the saint, and one day in the same week went to visit her tomb, where he heard mass and communicated, and suspended a beautiful votive offering of silver.

In the year 1648 Florence was visited by malignant spotted fever, arising from the bad state of the air. Sister Maria Caterina Rinuccini, a nun in the monastery of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, was attacked by this prevailing fever, and tormented moreover by excruciating pains in the head, and by inflammation of the lungs; in short, she was reduced to such prostration of strength, that having received the sacraments, and lost the use of speech, they expected nothing but her death. The mother-prioress applied to her person the pillow used by the saint, without her being conscious of it. She fell asleep, and whilst sleeping, it seemed to her that the saint made the sign of the cross on her heart, saying to her, "Thou art cured; get up, for my feast is near; go and arrange

my body." This was on the eighth day after the 22nd of May. In the meanwhile Sister Maria Caterina awoke, and feeling herself no longer oppressed, but quite lightened, whereas she had before suffered such a weight that she could not even raise an arm, said to the sister who watched her, "Sister, I am cured! Call the mother-prioress, that she may give me permission to rise." The mother-prioress was affected at the account, she nevertheless refused her permission to rise, though she felt sufficiently strong to do so, and the physicians to their utter astonishment found her in the morning entirely free from every malady, as she continued ever after, and returned to her exercises acknowledging the grace received from the saint.

In 1662 Giovanni Poggiali, oppressed by asthma and burning fever, after having applied many unavailing remedies, was advised by the physicians to arrange his affairs and dispose of his property previous to receiving the sacraments, for, humanly speaking, he had not long to live. The sick man's mother brought him a small piece of the saint's habit, which being placed on him, he instantly felt the oppression of his breath relieved, as also the fever, and in the course of six hours he was completely cured both of the fever and asthma, to the no small amazement of those who had seen him in his former state, into which he never after relapsed.

In the year 1666 Caterina, daughter of Domenico Poggiali, was suddenly seized by paralysis, which entirely deprived her of the use of her

right hand and arm, and so affected her speech as to prevent her from being understood. Her mother was extremely distressed, for as it was January, and the weather very severe, the medical men would neither visit her nor prescribe any medicines. The poor girl did nothing but weep, fearing that she should never recover. She had recourse to the saint, and asked for a little of her oil, instead of which a rose was sent which had touched the saint's body. The sick girl received it with great faith, and caused the sign of the cross to be made with it over her. Wonderful to relate, the flower had no sooner touched her, than the pain in her arm ceased, the power of articulation returned, and on the third day she recovered the free use of her hand and arm, being perfectly cured. She visited the tomb with her mother, and in gratitude left a votive offering of silver, in memorial of the favour received.

In 1664 Madalena Vittoria di Marco Frassinelli, who had been a widow from the year 1661, went to bed with perfect sight, but awoke blind. Many remedies were vainly applied by the medical attendants, so that the most experienced pronounced the blindness incurable, and her affliction was aggravated by the constant pain which she endured. After two years, confidence in our saint increased in her heart, and she was led every morning to hear mass at her tomb. On the year above-named she was at church whilst the panegyric of the saint was pronounced, and a flower was given her which had been on

her body. She took it, and applied it with great devotion and faith to her eyes, and instantly began to see so well, that she returned home without any assistance whatever, and the next morning went back to the church to give thanks to the saint.

It pleased the Divine Majesty also to work miracles by the oil of the lamp which burned at the tomb of the saint. In 1659 Madalena Baddi, who through a paralytic seizure had entirely lost the use of one side, was restored to health and the power of motion by being anointed with this oil.

Paolo Mateozzi, who was given over by the physicians, being anointed with this oil, fell into a sweet sleep, and on the second anointing was completely free from fever and every other ailment.

In 1663 it cured Antonio Francesco Fuorasassi of two wounds, which were in the opinion of the surgeon, Vincenzo Giannini, mortal, and he hung up a votive offering at her tomb.

In 1664 Costanza di Luca Misuri was given over by the physicians in fever, stomach-complaint, and dysentery. Madonna Fiore Schianchini brought her a little oil from the lamp, with which she was no sooner anointed, than the fever, vomiting, and dysentery ceased, and she was completely cured. She did not, however, ascribe the favour to Saint Mary Magdalene, but to another saint to whom she was devoted, and to whom she had recommended herself; and a few days after was seized with

most acute pains in one shoulder and in her bowels, which for fifteen days tormented her, without yielding to any remedy. She was inspired to ask for a little of the oil which was left, and whilst anointing herself with it, felt as though a wind were blowing in her shoulder and in her bowels; her pain ceased, and she heard these words, "Know who is the saint who has done thee this favour." She instantly asked her pardon, and returning her fervent thanks, proclaimed the miracle.

In 1660 Ginevra di Jacopo Bartolozzi, afflicted by high fever, which caused delirium, being anointed with oil from the lamp of the saint's tomb, felt instant relief and freedom from fever; and on the following morning she went to the church, and offered confession and communion in thanksgiving for the favour.

In 1659 a similar favour was granted to Tommaso di Simon Chiari da Mirignello, who acknowledged it by confession and communion.

In 1663 Elisabetta Spaziani having for two years suffered from extreme pain, and for three days and three nights been tormented without being able to take any rest, having received from Sister Caterina a little oil from the lamp, devoutly anointed herself with it, when the pain instantly ceased, and as she had promised, she carried to the saint a votive offering of silver.

I should never end were I to relate all the miracles and graces wrought by Almighty God by means of the relics of the saint. I will not, however, pass over those which were obtained

by merely asking her aid, or by vows and promises made to her. Amongst these one of the most signal was the favour which she granted to Don Domenico Caravita, son of Don Pietro, privy-counsellor to the king of Naples. In the year 1644 this gentleman wished to go to a village near Naples, accompanied by his two brothers, Don Giacinto, and Don Prospero, his cousin, Don Giovanni Caravita, and two young friends, Leonardo di Mauro, and Manilio Grisolia. Having passed the Ponte Madalena, he made the coachman alight, and took his place, intending to drive himself. Near the chapel of the Abbate Ambrosano, Don Prospero and Don Leonardo got out and walked behind the coach, sporting with their sticks. Don Domenico rose from the coach-box, on which he was seated, to look at them, and in turning, his left foot missing its footing, he fell forwards on one of the wheels, and with one leg under the axle-tree. The horses having the reins, which fell from his hands over his arms, instantly set off. His brother and friends sprang from the carriage to assist him, but the horses soon flew so fast as to leave them far behind. Don Domenico was fully aware of his perilous situation, and internally (for he could not do it in words) commended himself to the patroness of himself and his house, Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi. Hardly had he invoked her, when he seemed to see her before him in the Carmelite habit, and to hear her say, "Fear not, go on joyfully." These words, which he seemed to hear constantly repeated, removed all

fear, though the horses were still pursuing their precipitous career. When, however, he perceived that they had passed the gate of his own farm without stopping, he again invoked the saint, and interiorly heard her say that he must rise, and draw back the arm on which the reins hung. He had hardly moved it, when without any exertion on his part the horses stopped, reined in by the power of the invoked saint. Rising on the wheel, he leapt to the ground, and found that he was without shoes, and that all his clothes were torn to pieces, whilst he was entirely uninjured, excepting that one knee was a little grazed, and his arm rather painful. When his brothers and friends with the coachman were come up, and saw him alive, well, and without any wound, they were stunned with amazement, as they had thought he must be crushed to pieces; but on his telling them of the favour conferred by the saint, they all united with him in rendering her due thanks. On his return to the city, to commemorate the miracle, he caused it to be painted on canvass, and sent the picture to the church of the Carmelite Fathers of Santa Maria della Vita.

Another astonishing miracle was also performed in the case of Gaspare di Avomer, in the year 1647–8, which was the year of the rebellion in Naples. This person having retired for safety to Castel Nuovo, was interiorly led to betake himself to one of his ships, though the sea was very rough, and the weather tempestuous. He reached the vessel in a felucca, with no small

difficulty, on account of the dangerous gale, having fervently recommended his undertaking to the saint, his special protectress, whose relics he always wore about his neck. The wind seemed to increase, and the sea to become rougher, but though his companions expressed great fear, and entreated him to go on shore, Gaspare, by his promises of great reward, encouraged the mariners to row, and at great hazard they approached one of his ships, called St. Peter the Great, but though the crew of this vessel had ropes ready to throw to the people of the felucca, the state of the sea did not allow them to do so, as the felucca would have gone to pieces in dashing against the larger vessel. Again the counsel to return was given, but Gaspare, anxious to go on board the ship, seeing the long-boat attached to the poop by a strong cable, besought them to take him to this boat, in which he thought he should be safe, as it was large and solidly built; but in approaching the boat, the same difficulty and danger of destroying the felucca again occurred. However, this did not induce him to change his mind, as he hoped for success from the aid of Heaven and the prayers of the saint. They approached, and Gaspare raised his foot to steady the boat, and to leap in. He had before been warned that he should not venture to board the boat, but at the signal of the helmsman of the felucca. The latter, when he saw the right time, ordered the mariners to pull hard and approach the boat, whilst at the same time he

called out to the merchant to board her. He sprang forward, invoking the saint with a loud voice, and with still more fervour in his heart, and with his hands grasped the boat, when behold a mountainous wave fearfully raised the boat, to which he still clung in utter unconsciousness. When he came to himself, he found himself in the long-boat, on one of the benches, without at all comprehending how he came to be sitting there; when turning his eyes on the felucca, he saw that the wave had thrown her off to about a bow-shot's distance. Then recollecting himself, he returned thanks to God and the saint, through whose merits and intercession he had obtained his safety. And though the crew of the vessel had the same difficulty in bringing the boat to and getting him on board, he felt no more fear. The captain of the vessel wept for joy as he embraced him, who, as he said, had been lost and saved in an instant. He now gave thanks for the favour received from the saint, from whom he declared himself to have received the inspiration to leave the castle for the vessel at such imminent risk of his life, and he regarded this as an especial favour intended for his preservation, when he found afterwards that some persons in passing the door of the apartments which he occupied in the castle, had been killed by musket-shots, fired by the people from some high houses in the neighbourhood, so that he might reasonably believe, that had he remained, one of these shots would have reached him, as he was so frequently obli-

ged to pass in and out by that gate. The same Gaspare Avomer acknowledged the most singular favour from the intercession of the saint in the year 1656, having been delivered from the plague, by which he had been attacked at his villa at Posilipo on the 16th of July ; for being seized by violent fever, he discovered a carbuncle in the groin, and in extreme terror knelt down before a crucifix, at the foot of which was an image of the saint, which had been sent him from Florence, and which had touched her body. Praying most fervently, he applied the little image to the wound, as also other relics of the saint, without using any other remedies, and through her intercession the fever departed, and the contagious plague-spot also disappeared in a few hours, a favour most fervently acknowledged by the patient, whose faith and devotion to his tried protectress were greatly confirmed and exercised in many important circumstances. In 1663 Antonio di Antonio Gotti Santini, was attacked by a severe and loathsome disease, and covered with eschars worse than leprosy. The physicians tried various remedies for several months, but without the smallest success, so that they gave him over, and he then had recourse to the intercession of the saint, and bound himself by a vow, should she obtain his cure, to take her for his advocate and protectress, to visit her tomb, to carry thither a votive offering, and, finally, to repeat the hymn of the virgins with the prayers. Hardly had he finished when he began to feel himself

stronger, the offensive smell went off, the eschars dried and fell away, the monstrous swelling of his legs subsided, so that on the following morning he went to hear mass, and in a few days became stronger than he had been before his illness.

In consequence of a catarrh, Sister Maria Concordia Galetti, a nun in the monastery of St. Clement in Florence, had a seizure in the left side, supposed by the physicians to be paralytic, which confined her to her bed, where she could only be moved by the hands of others, being unable either to lift her arm or to use her hand. Her left leg was also shorter than the other. The physicians did what they could, but without the least success; wherefore, at the end of eight days, she bethought herself of applying with a confiding heart to the saint. She did so in the evening, and at night enjoyed sweet repose and quiet sleep, during which she seemed to hear a voice, saying, "Arise and go into the choir, for you are no longer ill!" At this voice she tried to rise, and finding that she could move very well, she went to the choir and spent some time there, returning thanks to God before an image of the saint, to whose tomb she sent an alms, causing a mass of thanksgiving to be celebrated there.

Margherita di Giacopo Chiari, wife of Vincenzo Brocchi, a Florentine sculptor, had for many months been suffering hopelessly from hæmorrhage, which had reduced her to extreme debility. Having heard that the body of the saint was ex-

posed to qualified persons, she desired to be taken to the church of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, urged by a lively confidence of regaining her health. She went on foot for greater devotion, though with no little pain, and supported by her husband; and as she went she commended herself to the saint, who with generous kindness was pleased to intercede for her recovery before she reached her tomb; for no sooner had she reached the street leading to the church, than she at once felt herself cured and strong, so that she continued her walk rather to give thanks for the favour than to implore it.

In the year 1634 Antonio Leoni, chancellor of the city of Forli in Romagna, was attacked by violent pains in every part of his body, and after trying all imaginable remedies without the slightest amendment, was regarded by the physicians as incurable, and being exceedingly afflicted at their decision, was advised by his confessor, a Carmelite friar, who incited him to commend himself to the saint. The sick man accepted the exhortation, and had hardly invoked her when he felt himself so much better, that he soon perfectly recovered, and never again suffered the least return of the pain; and in gratitude he caused a picture of the saint to be painted, and placed it in the church of the Carmelites of Forli, in a chapel belonging to one of his friends, in which he every year celebrated the feast of the saint on the day of her death; and the devotion of the people being consequently increased and many votive offerings presented for favours re-

ceived, this Leoni erected a chapel in the church mentioned above, which for the future increased the devotion and the concourse of people.

In 1661 Camillo Buoncristiani having been afflicted for two years by excessive pains in different parts of his body, especially in his breast, where a tumour had formed as large as an egg, which caused most acute suffering, had several times spit blood. The different fomentations and embrocations ordered by the physicians seemed rather to aggravate the disease, so that he was unable even to turn in bed, and was so wasted and emaciated, that he seemed about to expire. About that time his wife had been reading the Life of the Saint, and the account of the many favours granted by God through her intercession, and with great and sincere fervour recommended the invalid to her, who one day being more oppressed by his illness than usual, entreated his wife to place the book containing the Life of the Saint under the pillow on which his head was resting. She did so, adding a vow to her renewed and fervent entreaties. It was enough, for next morning he rose from that bed perfectly cured, to the astonishment of the physicians, and in a few days regained his strength entirely.

Alessandro di Piero Lapini, a little boy of three years old, who had fallen down some steps, was so much injured that he became lame and unable to stand. His recovery had been despaired of for many months, when his mother Francesca,

feeling herself interiorly moved to confide in the intercession of the saint, went one morning in consequence to the church of Santa Maria degl' Angeli, and entering the chapel of the saint, heard a mass there, and fervently recommended her child to her. On her return home she took him in her arms, saying, "Rejoice, my baby, I have recommended you to a great saint, who will cure you." Saying this, she set her baby on the ground, when he, who before could not stand, immediately began to walk and go about the house, and in a few days was fat and well as usual. The mother acknowledged the favour and caused a mass to be offered in thanksgiving at the tomb of the saint. In 1662 Anna de Pellegrino Viti was, humanly speaking, past hope, in consequence of a bad confinement. Pellegrino, her husband, warmly recommended her to the intercession of the saint, when, contrary to all expectations, she was safely delivered, and in gratitude sent oil and wax to be consumed in the monastery in honour of the saint. In 1662 Lucia, daughter of Francesco Cambi, suffered much from a cold in the right eye, there being a mole in the eye which had been closed for four months so that she could not see, and to this was added the torment which she suffered from constant sharp pains and from the flow of tears. What remedies had she not used? All which could be devised; but at last the physicians despaired of the cure. Her mother, Caterina, however,

did not despair of help from Heaven, and resolved to visit the body of St. Mary Magdalene for seven mornings. When she had begun this devotion, on awaking her daughter opened her eyes with recovered sight, having used no other remedy than washing her eyes with holy water from the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, where the body reposes, to whom she together with her mother offered due thanks.

In February, 1668, Caterina Melli ne' Villani was marvellously protected by our saint, for being one morning at table with her son, who was afflicted with melancholy madness, he in one moment became furious, struck his mother on the head with an iron fire-shovel, so violently as to break the handle, and then taking a stick in his hand repeated the blows. The poor lady being alone and helpless would have fled, but the son following her with the stick, attempted to throw her down a stair-case. She then gave herself up for lost, and commended herself to God and the saint. She came to a platform in the middle of the stairs, on which the door of a room opened, and thought she might save herself by entering it: when she heard a voice say, "Stay! Let her alone!" The lady was amazed at this, knowing that there was no one in the house, and turning as well as she could, saw the saint clothed in her habit, on a white cloud, and the maniac with his arm uplifted in the air gazing in stupor on her, so that the lady placed herself in safety, thanking the saint

for the preservation of her life. She had, however, four mortal wounds in the head, the skull being fractured. On being called in, the physician and two surgeons were unanimous in their opinion that she would not recover, the case being hopeless; but the good lady herself never despaired, and every day recommended herself to the saint, who warded off fever, and constantly mitigated the pain which the surgeons occasioned by their applications; and beyond all hope the case terminated favourably in a few days. In gratitude for so marvellous a cure, she caused many masses to be celebrated at the altar of the saint, and left there a beautiful votive offering of silver.

In 1661 Margarita, a little girl three years of age, daughter of Antonio Cocci, a labourer in a farm at Campi, belonging to the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli, was left alone in the house, when late one evening, as she was in a narrow passage where two persons could hardly walk abreast, a furious animal, having escaped from its stall, ran through, so that the child was under him between his legs. The farmer ran after the beast, but seeing at a distance that the child was under him, thought her dead, as there was no one to help her; but when on coming up he found her alive and well without the slightest injury or alarm, he was in utter amazement. He took her to her father, telling him to give thanks to God, for from what he had seen, which he minutely related,

he had given her up for lost. The father then questioned the little girl: "Who saved you from the furious beast who ran after you?" when she instantly answered, "The saint took me by the hand, and said, 'Pass there!' and made me pass on one side between the legs of the ox." "What was she like?" said the father, "was she dressed in black or in white, with a black veil on her head?" "The veil was white," said he to try her; but she answered, "No. It was black, like that which the saint has in the room where I say the Ave Maria." What excited their greater wonder, was the fact, that though made to repeat the story many times, she always said the same, never varying in the least, though things were often said to her in contradiction, and so she continued to tell the tale for two years; when being taken by her parents to Florence to return thanks to the saint, she, accepting the little thing's grateful innocence, conferred on her another favour in that city.

She had been with her mother to the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, to hear mass in the chapel of the saint, and was afterwards led to the grate of the parlour, where she said, "I have seen the saint." "There are a great many painted on the church," said the mothers, "which did you see?" "All these," said she, "are in the altar, but the most beautiful is she whom I saw at the grate like this, only that grate is prettier than this, and the saint lies under the

altar dressed in black and white. She has a white veil with a black one over it, and on her head a silver crown with pearls all over it, but the crown is not like mine which I have in my pocket, but high;" and here she put her hand to her head, showing that the crown encircled the head of the saint.

To induce her to speak, and to assure themselves of the favour shown her by the saint, they said, "You did not see clearly, she is above the altar in the picture." The little thing answered, "There is one above too, but the one under is most beautiful." On being asked in what position the saint was, she answered, "Lying down, with her hands so," exactly showing how the saint lies, and always making the same answer to the numerous persons who questioned her.

On leaving the monastery her mother complained to the child, "If you saw the saint, why did you not tell me, that I might have seen her too?" To which she replied, "You have great eyes, and I have little eyes. You looked above, and I below." Being asked how tall the saint was, she said, "As tall as Mamma, but she is black and the hands are whiter;" and then she added, "She told me that I must be good, and I said, 'Yes, I will be good.'" Neither her mother nor any of the family had ever seen the body of the saint, so that she could never have heard its position in the shrine described, so that it was firmly believed that the saint had shown

herself to her exactly as she lies under the altar, which was at that time completely closed. The little girl went to the church with her mother the next morning, and said that she again saw what she saw the morning before. In 1669 a report was spread in Florence of the dangerous illness of Signor Marchese Luca degli Albizi, on whom all remedies had been tried in vain; but no sooner had Fra. Carlo de Pistoia, a Capuchin friar, placed the veil of the saint, his protectress and advocate, on his forehead, imploring her aid, than he took food without nausea, slept, and on his awaking found himself entirely free from fever and quite restored. In honour of the saint he made an attestation of the fact, which was regarded by himself and the whole city as an evident miracle. I should not soon finish, were I to relate the marvels wrought by God through the intercession of the saint, or were I to enumerate the registered oaths and attestations of favours received, which are in the possession of the mothers of Santa Maria degli Angeli, in whose church the body of the saint reposes. I know that every day the Lord is pleased to increase her glory more and more, as is proved by the pictures and votive offerings hung about her tomb.

CHAPTER LXXI.

OF THE VENERATION WITH WHICH THE INCORRUPTED BODY OF THE SAINT WAS REGARDED, AND OF THE FAME OF HER SANCTITY.

As the saint, by her intercession and patronage, became every day more glorious throughout Europe, and even beyond it, it would hardly be believed how many entreaties were made to the nuns of Santa Maria degl' Angeli for her relics: and through their piety, and for the glory of God and of the saint, they have now dispossessed themselves of all the veils, habits, and every article once used by the saint. They have been sent to many cities of France, Spain, Flanders, to Lisbon, Vienna, Inspruch, England, Poland, Ireland, the East and West Indies; to Congo, to Angola, to Rome, Sicily, Naples, Venice, La Marca, Romagna, Bologna, Modena, Mantua, Parma, Milan, Genoa, Lucca, and many other Italian cities: and in many of the places named, chapels have been built and altars dedicated. The devotion and veneration of the people have constantly increased, and in those places where there are either chapels or altars of the saint, there are a number of donations and votive offerings for favours received through her intercession. All this, as it increased the

esteem of the people for the saint, also increased the desire of seeing her more glorified in the holy Church. And if this was felt in the cities where her relics were venerated, still more was it felt in that city which possesses the tomb in which her holy and fragrant body still lies incorrupt in the chapel of the Nasi family, in which there was once a picture of St. Bernard. But in 1629 the patrons wished to have the picture of the saint placed there, who is represented kneeling, with extended arms, and receiving a veil from the blessed Virgin. The altar was adorned with marbles, and for its greater embellishment Sr. Lutozzo Nasi, the last of the family, in September, 1667, left 3000 crowns. Under the marble altar the sacred deposit reposes in a shrine of the clearest crystal, worked in four diamond-shaped pannels, and framed in gilt pannelling of most noble design. The shrine rests on a base nearly a yard high, gilt with flowers in intaglio, interwoven with scrolls and arabesques, which look at once rich and beautiful. The pavement also, on which this base rests, is of no small beauty, being composed of the finest marbles of various colours. In 1659, when the new crystal shrine was made of a better form and more beautiful than the first, by Signor Gio. Vai de Prato, for favours received, the body of the saint was clothed in a new habit of black cloth of gold, and an upper tunic of white cloth of silver, like the habit worn by the nuns of that monastery. Silken flowers were strewn over it

for ornament, and a crown of silver is on the head. A golden crucifix with arabesques at the extremities of the cross, is placed on the breast, which was presented for that purpose by Signor Commendatore Fra. Gio. Francesco Ricasoli, and a medal of pure gold is at the feet, sent by Pope Urban VIII., with an order that it should be kept there. Outside the shrine is seen a large golden cross of great value, and a golden heart, on which are engraved these words, "Signum Cordis Ferdinandi Ducis Mantuæ 6. et Montis Ferrati 4. Beatæ Mariæ Magdalenæ de Pazzis dicatum." Around the shrine are ten small lamps of silver, which are always lighted when the sacred body is exposed, besides eleven silver ones suspended between the outer and inner chapels, presented by different persons devoted to the saint, amongst which are two in the form of a heart, one of them gilt, presented by the Most Serene Prince Nicolo Francesco, Duke of Lorraine, and endowed with an annual sum that it may be always lighted at the sacred relics. So many votive offerings of silver of various size and form are both within and without the chapel, that to use the words of the process made in Florence in 1663, vix dinumerari possunt; and from that time to this many more have been added, the devotion of the people and the fame of her sanctity and miracles being much increased.

CHAPTER LXXII.

OF HER SOLEMN CANONIZATION.

Though Urban VIII. of happy memory, who honoured the saint by the title of Blessed, and exposed her to public and universal veneration by a decree given May, 1626, had declared, with the concurrence of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, that she might be also canonized when it pleased his Holiness; he himself by a new decree ordered that further discussion should be made before proceeding in so weighty a matter, and that there should be new processes formed for the more mature consideration of her merits. His desires having been punctually obeyed, and it being evident that the devotion of the people had increased, God having glorified her by many miracles, the entreaties of their Most Serene Highnesses of Tuscany, of the entire Carmelite order, and of the mothers of her institute, were renewed. The promoter of the cause was his Eminence Cardinal Azzolino, who has ever promoted it with all his influence; and the two processes formed, one in Florence and the other in Naples, were diligently examined. The Sacred Congregation then seeing that the processes were clearly proved, and that the veneration of and devotion to the saint were increased, and many miracles

wrought by God through her intercession, determined to bring these proofs before his Holiness, Clement IX., who, on the 10th of December, 1668, in full congregation, having heard the opinions of the lords, cardinals, prelates, and counsellors, interposed the decree for her solemn canonization, declaring that he would solemnize it on the 28th of April, 1669. Therefore, having given orders for the arrangement of all due honours in the preparation of the church of St. Peter, he solemnly canonized the Blessed Mary Magdalene, declaring her worthy of the honours of a saint, with an innumerable concourse of people, and to the unspeakable joy of the Carmelite order and the monasteries of her observance, as also to the universal glory of the Church, which has enjoyed, and will for ever enjoy, the example of her most holy life, and the effective patronage of her powerful intercession.

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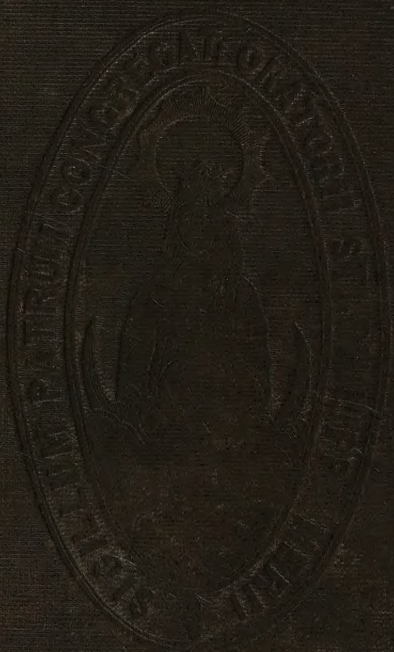
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Life of St. Mary Magdalene
TITLE of Pazzi